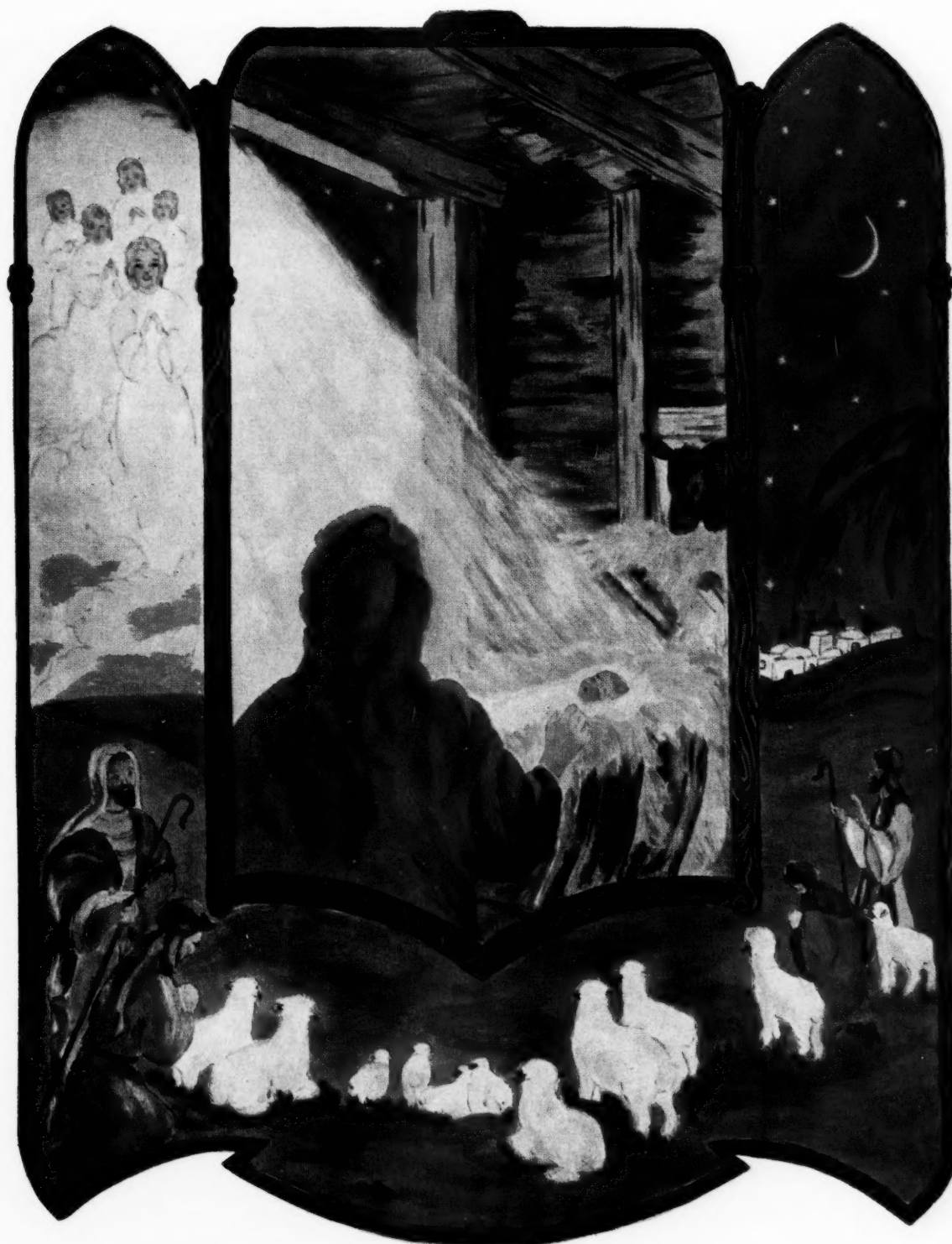


THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE



Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

The True Date of Christ's Birth

Vol. 42, Nos. 6, 7

March 19, 1955

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THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

Percy J. Thatcher, Editor

March 19, 1955

This Issue

This issue of THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE is a combination of our True Christmas and New Year, and Easter numbers. We have combined these two numbers for your benefit. As these events are so close together we feel it most appropriate to present evidence and other thoughts pertaining to these events in one issue. We hope you will find it interesting, enjoyable, and an assistance in your observance of this natal day.

Our Cover

Through the long and checkered career of the Chosen People, the hope of the Messiah's coming was both the bond and the support of the race. This hope shone clear and bright in the light of a hundred prophecies. Now, in the time-hallowed scene depicted on our cover, the lights converge and focus.

In a little town, of a poor family, in the humblest of circumstances, the Messiah entered life, not to rule the world in that generation, but to prove Himself and to work out His own salvation.

In keeping with all the rest of this strange episode, the dazzling spectacle of the heavenly host and the exultant words of their song were reserved for a handful of humble shepherds.

The tenderly familiar Christmas story is more than mere history or biography; it is prophecy in itself. Far from being the ultimate in fulfillment, it is a type or shadow of the greater Day when our earth shall have a new birth to glory and immortality, when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God," and, with the saints, shall rule the world in righteousness.

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THE MEGIDDO MESSAGE is published every two weeks by the Megiddo Mission Church, 481 Thurston Road, Rochester 19, N. Y. Make checks or Money Orders for all literature payable to the Megiddo Mission Church. Please notify promptly of any change of address. Entered as second-class matter, October 15, 1920, at the Post Office at Rochester, N. Y., under Act of March 3, 1879.

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WHAT MUST WE DO TO BE SAVED?

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THE Megiddo Mission is an independent organization. It is in no way affiliated with any other religious body. It was founded in the year 1880 by the late Rev. L. T. Nichols, and has been located at the present address in Rochester, N. Y., since 1904.

History of the Megiddo Mission

OUR LATEST PUBLICATION

The pages of this book unfold the purpose of our organization and the scope of our work, both past and present, for the dissemination of Truth. If you cherish the desire to know more about the Mission you may get some of this information through the printed page. A comprehensive synopsis of our beliefs is contained in the Appendix. Price 40 cents postpaid.

The Opening Year

WE STAND again at the threshold of the new year. At this time God's people pause to mark the swift passing of time, and to seek in song, prayer, reminiscence and exhortation a source of fresh vigor, fortitude and faith with which to meet the coming days.

How full of seriousness are the thoughts which arise at this season when Time strikes like a clock, as it were, marking off the yearly cycles, reminding us afresh that a man's days are "swifter than a weaver's shuttle." Oh, that we might early learn to use life's precious moments, not for the attainment of the slight joys this present existence affords, but as stepping-stones to that bright, golden Tomorrow!

How soon that grand and wonderful Day will be here when the Heavens shall disclose their glory and God will send His Son to earth to reign as King upon Zion's holy hill! Were we gifted with immortal vision we might behold even now "the whole creation . . . on tiptoe to see the wonderful sight of the sons of God coming into their own"!

How we should tremble at the realization that we are standing on the very verge of a new Era for this earth, when man's systems, so familiar to us now, shall be no more! Gone will be the evils that today spread a mantle of misery over the human race. Over the border into that new Age the low, the base, the mean, the proud, the selfish and the cruel cannot pass, and slothfulness, wasting and wanton destruction will be unknown. In that Day mankind shall live in peace and prosperity, and "they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more."

Of all the duties, of all the responsibilities that must go with us into this coming year, the most urgent is that responsibility of pushing to completion this noble work which we have begun. Past sins, long-time habits, unfavorable surroundings, ill health or poverty must not stand in our way. Like as a plant in the course of a year will grow, so we who have been planted in the vineyard of the Lord must not remain stagnant and still, but "grow up into him in all things . . . till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." And not until we have attained that maturity, can we think of relaxing our fullest effort.

While Christianity is consistently humble, and sternly intolerant of evil; within the vast, illimitable sphere of all that is good and pure and true it is neither small nor narrow, but mighty. And its might knows no limitations. Throughout Eternity it continues to grow and expand in the heavenly graces.

If we have reverence for God's Word, when we attain an understanding of the Scriptures we will forsake our

former misconceptions. With a definite sense of happiness we exchange the false for the true—accepting the righteous and reasonable doctrine of good works in place of the false teaching of Adamic condemnation and Jesus' sacrificial death; the gospel of the coming Kingdom on earth instead of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul; and many another venerated falsehood will we discard when we find a truth that can be proven. But we are less reluctant to change our *minds* in *theory* than we are to change our *lives* in *practice*. Too often the work, worry and cares of this mortal existence fill our days, while the vision of the "world to come" is dim and far away.

Theory must be carried into practice—not in some distant day, but *now*. "If any man be in Christ," said the Apostle, "he is a *new creature*." And the Master said, "The first of all the commandments is . . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." *Christianity is not only to believe, but to do.*

How wide might be our influence for good if we would at every opportunity radiate the sunshine of a Christ-

like life! But too often we are, instead, so timid that when it comes to lifting ourselves out of the rut in which we have traveled through the years we draw back, hesitant at venturing forth into new enterprises in the service of the Lord. And it seems we are even loathe to turn from our old familiar sins! Truly, the "old man" within ourselves is a firmly entrenched and deadly foe; and to conquer him will require our most sincere endeavors!

There are some people with whom religion is a form, and others with whom it is a sentiment; but in the life of a Christian it must be a *force*, active, vigorous; not complacent, but compelling. The same force that marked the life of the Master and of the early Christians must impel our lives, that so overflowing will be our souls with the rich theme of God's truth we will rise up and give thanks to the Lord at all times (Phil. 4:4), and our glad songs of rejoicing will fall upon the ears of an astonished world, bound in the prison house of darkness, even as did the songs which Paul and Silas sang on a midnight long ago in a Philippian prison cell!

.

We are standing again at the threshold of a new year; the door of the past year is closing behind us. Let the past suffice for drifting, dreaming, playing. Before us there is work to do; there are stern tasks yet to be performed, and the precious years are fleeting, youth is passing. Power, intellect and health may not last. Then with hearts of gratitude, with minds alert and souls awake, let us meet this opening year. It is an *important* year. Every new day offers golden opportunities that, once gone, Time will never bring back.

To All Our Readers

The Megiddo Mission extends heartfelt wishes that the coming season may find you increasing in the riches of His grace.

May the example of the Master guide you into Goodness, Righteousness and Truth, that your lives may reflect His holiness, shining forth as beams of heavenly light in this night of darkness.

The True Date of Christ's Birth

Evidence from Sacred Sources

PEOPLE are coming more and more to recognize the Biblical and historical fact that December 25 is not the true date of Christ's birth. Such information is broadcast to the public yearly through the medium of radio, television and news periodicals. However, the world at large seems hesitant to investigate the subject thoroughly, and still more reluctant to abandon the false date and practice in favor of the true. Many people gullibly accept as factual the unproved statement that the true date of Christ's birth is unknown.

How strange it would be for God to leave His Church in ignorance of the natal day of so noble a Personage as Jesus Christ, His well-beloved Son and earth's long-awaited Messiah! Surpassingly strange it would be to cloak the actual date in impenetrable obscurity and at the same time command the Church to render honor to whom honor is due (Rom. 13:7)! The inconsistency of such doings has no place in the scheme of an infallible Heavenly Father.

It is an accepted fact that Christ's birth marks the end of B. C. and the beginning of A. D. Therefore, the day of His birth must of necessity be New Year's Day as well. (No indefinable week can divide the two occasions, which our present calendar so inexplicably does.) If we can ascertain the date of the Bible New Year, we shall know the exact time of the Nativity.

"OBSERVE THE MONTH ABIB"

The time for the commencement of the year is given explicitly in Exodus 12:1, 2. "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you." Exodus 13:4 records the name of this month as *Abib*. No whisper from the Sacred Page indicates that this time has ever been changed. Even without further investigation, one might be justified in assuming *Abib* 1st to be the true date of Christ's birth, but the Almighty has provided much more evidence.

The definition of *Abib* and its equivalent *Nisan* is enlightening: "The month of green ears; the spring or sprouting month, beginning with the new moon of March or April. The first month of the year as instituted on coming out of the land of Egypt; it also denotes the month of flowers." This establishes the beginning of God's year in the glorious springtime when all nature is bursting forth with new life.

That the New Year was and is an occasion to be observed by God's people, is stated plainly in Deut. 16:1, "Observe the month *Abib*."

ABIB WAS OBSERVED

This command has not been overlooked or slighted by devoted followers of the Lord through the ages. We find by perusing the history of David that it was his earnest desire to join with his family in Bethlehem to commemorate this holy feast day. When David was compelled to flee from the presence of Saul, he said unto Jonathan, "Behold, tomorrow is the new moon, and I should not fail to sit with the king at meat. . . . If thy father at all miss

me, then say, David earnestly asked leave of me that he might run to Bethlehem his city: for there is a yearly sacrifice ['feast,' margin] there for all the family" (I Samuel 20:5, 6).

Mention of this *Abib* festival occurs again in the Psalms. "Blow up the trumpet in the new moon, in the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob" (81:3, 4). We have no record that this law was ever annulled; it is binding today upon the true Israel of God.

CHRIST'S BIRTH OCCURRED AT THE ABIB FEAST

As David found it a sacred privilege as well as a holy obligation to observe the new year feast days, the same was true of his posterity. A thousand years after his demise, the descendants of David were still journeying to Bethlehem year by year to "observe the month *Abib*." Impelled by the same desire and directed by the same command which had moved their father David so long ago, Joseph and Mary had journeyed to Bethlehem for the *Abib* festival, when there was born "in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

This provides us with a chain of evidence stretching from the Exodus to the Nativity, showing that through all the vicissitudes, the people of God did not neglect to observe the *Abib* feast days, and when the time was ripe for the Redeemer's coming, Jesus Christ was born at this identical time, in *Abib*, the "month of flowers," "corresponding with our March or April."

THE TABERNACLE — LITERAL AND SPIRITUAL

Bible scholars have long been aware of the spiritual parallel implied by many literal figures under the Law of Moses. In fact we have a Bible rule in Hebrews 10:1 which justifies such parallels. The Law had "a shadow of good things to come."

It is significant that Moses set up a literal tabernacle which was typical of the spiritual house of the Lord. "Christ as a Son over his own house: whose house are we" (Heb. 3:6). The following passage gives further definition to the spiritual tabernacle. "For there was a tabernacle made; the first, . . . which was a figure for the time then present. . . . But Christ being come a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle. . . . We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the *true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, and not man" (Heb. 9:2, 9, 11; 8:1, 2).

It is further significant that the literal tabernacle was erected at a specific time, by divine decree. "The Lord spake unto Moses, saying, On the first day of the first month shalt thou set up the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation" (Exodus 40:2). As the literal tabernacle was reared *on the first day of the first month* of God's year, so Christ, the first stone completed for the spiritual tabernacle, was born on the first day of the first month—*Abib* 1st.

Evidence from Secular Sources . . .

INSPIRED writers have furnished information concerning the correct time of the Nativity and the dawn of the new year. Now we shall consult secular writers to corroborate the Divine Record.

CLIMATIC CONDITIONS IN PALESTINE

McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia informs us that Christ's birth "could not at all events have fallen in December or January, since at that time of the year the flocks are not found in the open fields during the night but in pens." From *Schaff's Church History* we have the following: "The time of pasturing in Palestine, which has but two seasons, the dry and the wet, or summer and winter, begins . . . in March and lasts until November."

With these facts in view, it is evident that had "angels from the realms of glory" visited the Judean hillside "on a cold winter's night that was so deep," there would have been no shepherds present to receive their glad proclamation that the Saviour was born.

Moreover, Bethlehem could not have been the Saviour's birthplace in midwinter, for it was some eighty miles distant from the home of Joseph and Mary, and such a journey would have been physically impossible for them at that season when the "roads become muddy, deep and slippery," according to an authority on climatic conditions in Palestine.

One purpose of Joseph's journey was to pay his taxes as decreed by Caesar Augustus, and no shrewd Roman overlord would have ordered a taxation at a season of the year when it would have been impossible for the populace to respond.

HOW THE DATE OF THE NATIVITY WAS LOST

Oftentimes when we present the evidence proving Abib first is the date of Christ's birth, we are met with this inquiry: "If, as you so confidently claim, Christ was born in the spring, why is the world at large ignorant of the fact?"

The answer is found in Bible prophecy as well as in the annals of secular history. Daniel foretold that the Roman power would change God's times and laws (7: 25). The following is a brief synopsis of how this change was effected. (We could fill pages with lengthy quotations from noted historians and reliable encyclopedias.)

Although professed Christians the world over celebrate Dec. 25 year after year, comparatively few are aware that the observance can be traced to pagan festivals long antedating Christianity. With all the evidence available in Biblical, ecclesiastical and secular history, there is no logical reason that the world at large should remain ignorant of the fact that Christ was not born in midwinter but in the beautiful springtime.

A few centuries after the birth of Jesus Christ, Pagan Rome, destined to become the mistress of the world, was tightening its grip upon mankind. Their feast days bore no similarity to those of the Christians, either in time or in manner of observance. The one was in December, the other in Abib; the one was the vilest and basest of festivals; while the Christians' feast was an occasion of fresh inspiration and high resolve.

The Roman Saturnalia (December 17—24) was an event of increasing popularity because at that time all the customary restraints of law and morality were cast aside.

Throughout the Roman Empire the Winter Solstice or birthday of the sun was observed on December 25, be-

cause at that time the sun began to rise to new vigor after its autumnal decline.

The Roman New Year was marked by another festival, Kalends, beginning on January 1st and lasting for three days. Private dwellings and public buildings were lavishly decked with laurels, green trees and gay lights. It was an occasion of riotous life, banqueting, games and license.

The true Christians would have nothing whatever to do with these heathen observances. They refused to decorate their homes, and would not lay so much as a single grain of incense upon the altars of Rome. However, for the majority of Christians—those in name only—the Roman customs had an ever-increasing appeal.

We should bear in mind that in the beginning of Christianity the followers of Christ were but a humble group in the midst of a pagan world. But soon the "mystery of iniquity" or "man of sin" began his deadly work among them, and continued until there was a complete apostasy from the truth to fables. This was the ascent of Papal Rome, which followed in the track of Pagan Rome.

At first all the ecclesiastical divines "fought tooth and nail" against this worldliness which was creeping into their folds. But when they found their influence to be of none effect against popular appeal, they perceived that if they were to grasp their share in the rising prestige of the Empire, if they were to convert the pagans, they could do so only by compromise. They must relax their principles. This they did.

They deliberately substituted the birth of Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, for the birth of the sun-god, Sol, hoping thus to draw away to Christ's worship some adorers of the earthly sun. Thus it was that December 25, formerly the birthday of the sun, was termed Christ's birthday.

The earliest formal celebration of the birth of Christ on December 25 took place at Rome about the middle of the fourth century. In the next century the Roman Church ordered that December 25 be observed as an official Christian festival. The leaders of the Catholic Church were imitating the profane model which they had been impatient to destroy. What heathen customs they could they repressed; what they could not repress they adopted.

"Taken altogether, the coincidences of the Christian with the heathen festivals are too close and too numerous to be accidental. They mark the compromise which the Church [Papal] in the hour of its triumph was compelled to make with its vanquished yet still dangerous rival."

The doors of their temples and cathedrals were opened wide to admit the customs of the Roman Saturnalia, the Winter Solstice, and the Kalends. The pagans, finding within the bosom of the Church complete satisfaction for their lusts, flocked eagerly through her open portals.

Thus Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled. The Roman power changed God's "times and laws," and "cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and prospered" (Daniel 7: 25; 8: 12).

Herein lies the reason why the true date of Christ's birth is cloaked in obscurity—it has long been covered over with Romish error; but by thrusting aside the error and searching for the true date, we find it to be as plain as any other subject of Divine elucidation.

And so today, with the true date of Christ's birth lost to mankind at large, it requires great moral courage to withstand the prevailing views of the entire social and religious world and observe the Nativity on the correct day and in a God-accepted way.

A Home Christmas Service

Order of Service

A Welcome

Hymn: "Peace on Earth."

Scripture Reading: Luke 2: 8-20.

Prayer

Hymn: "Joy to the World," No. 74, Megiddo Hymnal.

Sermon: Celebrating Christmas and New Year's Day.

Hymn: "Let Thy Truth Lead Me," No. 32, Megiddo Hymnal.

Benediction

(Reading should be done by the head of household, or his substitute. Additional songs or readings may be added as time and circumstances permit.)

A Welcome

FRRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS, we are glad to have you join us in remembrance and observance of this day which is the true anniversary of our Lord's birth. We rejoice that God has revealed to us the true date of the Nativity. We have been happy in the possession of this knowledge, as well as the knowledge of God's eternal plan for mankind and this planet. We know our rejoicing will not be lasting if we do not share this knowledge with others. This is why we have invited you here today. Sharing this knowledge increases our joy in possessing it.

We can furnish evidence in abun-

dance to support our views on these matters, and it would be profitable for all earnest Bible students to investigate it. However, in our service today stress will be laid on the manner of observance of Christ's birth, and the ways in which our lives should be affected by the example of our Lord. As this is also the beginning of a new year we are interested in beginning it properly and with earnest intentions to live better lives the coming months.

We say confidently that the thoughts we shall hear expressed possess stimulation enough for us to attain greater heights in our spiritual endeavors.

Peace on Earth

Prayer

ETHERNAL FATHER, through whose loving guidance we are gathered here to worship and praise Thee: We thank Thee that in this troubled world Thou hast furnished a Lamp unto our feet, and a Light for our path. We thank Thee that the meaning of this day of our Lord's birth has been made known to us.

As our Lord gave His life in service to Thee and an example to us, may we give our lives for Thee in loving kindness one to another as Thou hast commanded.

Open our eyes where we are yet slow to see Thy will. Open our ears that we may hear Thy Voice more perfectly. Open our mouths that we may sing forth Thy praise. Heal our hidden deformities and create in us the desire for the high, the noble and grand things of life which only Thou canst give. Grant us faith for the days ahead that we may long and work for the day when Thy will is done in earth as it is done in Heaven. Amen.

1. O'er the hills of old Ju-de-a, Ho-ly
2. A-bub moon, the spring-time bring-ing, Time of
3. Long a-go the prom-ised bless-ing, An-gel

night so long a-go, Rang the sweet an-gel-ic
flowers and ver-dure bright, Dim-ly shone in western
her-alds sang on high, Looking for-ward to the

cho-rus With ma-jes-tic ebb and flow,
heav-en, On that cloud-less, si-lent night,
com-ing Of the Lord, now ver-y nigh.

"Peace on earth, give God the glo-ry; Peace on earth,—good will to
men." King of kings, a royal Savior; Soon He comes to earth again.

Benediction

HEAVENLY FATHER: We thank Thee for the blessings of this day. We feel it has been good for us to have been here. May the thoughts and impressions of this day linger with us and be a source of joy in the days ahead. Grant that each new day may bring us new joy in Thy Truth, new understanding of Thy will for us, and new strength for Thy service. Forgive us as we turn from our sins. Bless us as we walk before Thee, that all our work may be done in humility and to Thy glory. Amen.

Bid the New Year welcome,
And drop the old from sight;
Gather all your vigor,
Press forward in the fight,
Let this be your motto:
"FOR GOD AND FOR THE RIGHT."

"Every step toward Christ kills a doubt. Every thought, word, and deed for Him carries you away from discouragement."

—Sel.

The Megiddo Message

Celebrating Christmas

and New Year's Day

CHRISTMAS ONCE AGAIN! The old but ever new story never grows wearisome: the story of Mary and Joseph, their journey to Bethlehem, the Babe in the manger, the shepherds on the hillside, the angels, the "Wise Men," the guiding "star." These by their very simplicity never cease to fascinate; the story is never tiresome because of repetition.

But the Christmas narrative is more than a story. Its meaning greatly surpasses the spirit and practices of a commercialized world on a day of pagan origin. It is more than a festal season whose significance is encompassed by a round of secular pleasures and hectic activities. Far more it is than the giving and receiving of gifts or of family reunions.

On that day was born a King, one who was to be the Saviour of His people. So significant was the event and so joyous that angelic beings announced the glad news to the wondering shepherds; and further, an angelic multitude praised and glorified God on the occasion. This is what the first Christmas day meant to the angels.

But fascinating as the Christmas story may be, in his account Luke reminds us very forcibly of the fact that the first Christmas had also its dark clouds. Palestine was an occupied country. The purpose of the census was that the people might be assessed for their taxes to their hated overlords. While the first Christmas had its beauty, its setting had also its ugliness.

The world into which Jesus was born was not unlike our world of today. It was a brutal world, a world of blood, oppression, cruelty; a sad, cynical, morbid world where religions of the day had no power over the lives of men. Fears, disillusionment, superstition and hopelessness possessed the hearts of men. In such a world Jesus grew to manhood and took up His mission when His time had come. He faced the world as it was.

EFFECT OF CHRIST'S MESSAGE

Jesus had a God-given message to humanity, proclaiming His Kingship, His heirship of the coming Kingdom of God. He came to revive hope in the hearts of men and that they might prepare for the better life. The Apostles took up His message. In the early years of the Church the people were thrilled with the greatness and wonder of the Gospel. They were radiant with its power. No call to service for His cause was unheeded, nor was any duty considered a burden. The publishing of the Good News which Jesus brought to men made such a tremendous impact upon His followers that it resulted in an amazing change of life. And His influence was felt even by those who did not acknowledge Him.

The men and women who obeyed the command to preach the tidings of the Kingdom of God were men of radiant and triumphant spirit. They were changed individuals, charged with a new life. There was an entirely new note in their voices, a new song in their hearts, and a new word on their tongues. Like Simeon, they had seen the One who would show the way of salvation. For those who published the Glad Tidings, old things had passed away and all things had become new. In spite of all the cruel persecutions they endured, Christianity triumphed

amazingly in that decadent world. Their zeal for the cause of Christ surpassed all zeal of the world.

This is what Christ's birth meant to the early Church.

What does the birth of Christ mean to us? How shall we observe it?

As Christ came into the world working out His salvation and teaching the way of salvation to men, in what manner can we better honor Him or praise God for His coming than by doing as He did? How can we more fittingly commemorate His birth than by a dedication of our lives to the same ideals for which His life was given? Much of the celebration of Christmas in the world is given to exchanging of gifts; the giving is generally to those of the family circle or best friends. Strange, at the time set to commemorate His birth, men ignore the call of God to serve Him.

Professing to be Christians, it is assumed we want to be Christ-like. We want our lives to be such that God will be well-pleased with them. Nothing would please Him more than a complete consecration to His service. When we utter with the Psalmist, "I delight to do thy will, O my God," and mean it, that is pleasing to God. When we say truthfully, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," it is acceptable to the Almighty. And when, as Jesus declared, we love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, we are doing that which delights the Eternal.

When we give our lives as an offering in service to God, this gift transcends in value and significance all else that we can give. He who gives out of his material abundance does not begin to measure up to him who disrupts the fondest pattern of his life by his response to God's call to serve Him. It would have been easy for the Galilean fishermen, or Matthew the tax collector, when Jesus summoned them, "Follow me," to reply in a different manner: "We will give financial support; let someone else go with you." Finances are necessary, to be sure, but it takes men of faith, intellect and determination to spread the Gospel abroad or perform the many duties associated with it. A true recognition of the meaning of Christmas will cause us deeply to consider these thoughts. It may mean a break with many of our former delights and it will call for a sacrifice; but, contradictory as this may seem, it will add immeasurably to our life. A response to God's claim upon our lives brings many blessings in lifted ideals, broader horizons, golden fellowships, deepened purposes and spiritual joys. Jesus gave His entire life, the Apostles did likewise. This is the spirit of Christmas. *Do we feel this way today?*

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A Home Christmas Service

Order of Service

A Welcome

Hymn: "Peace on Earth."

Scripture Reading: Luke 2: 8-20.

Prayer

Hymn: "Joy to the World," No. 74, Megiddo Hymnal.

Sermon: Celebrating Christmas and New Year's Day.

Hymn: "Let Thy Truth Lead Me," No. 32, Megiddo Hymnal.

Benediction

(Reading should be done by the head of household, or his substitute. Additional songs or readings may be added as time and circumstances permit.)

A Welcome

FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS, we are glad to have you join us in remembrance and observance of this day which is the true anniversary of our Lord's birth. We rejoice that God has revealed to us the true date of the Nativity. We have been happy in the possession of this knowledge, as well as the knowledge of God's eternal plan for mankind and this planet. We know our rejoicing will not be lasting if we do not share this knowledge with others. This is why we have invited you here today. Sharing this knowledge increases our joy in possessing it.

We can furnish evidence in abun-

dance to support our views on these matters, and it would be profitable for all earnest Bible students to investigate it. However, in our service today stress will be laid on the manner of observance of Christ's birth, and the ways in which our lives should be affected by the example of our Lord. As this is also the beginning of a new year we are interested in beginning it properly and with earnest intentions to live better lives the coming months.

We say confidently that the thoughts we shall hear expressed possess stimulation enough for us to attain greater heights in our spiritual endeavors.

Prayer

ETHERNAL FATHER, through whose loving guidance we are gathered here to worship and praise Thee: We thank Thee that in this troubled world Thou hast furnished a Lamp unto our feet, and a Light for our path. We thank Thee that the meaning of this day of our Lord's birth has been made known to us.

As our Lord gave His life in service to Thee and an example to us, may we give our lives for Thee in loving kindness one to another as Thou hast commanded.

Open our eyes where we are yet slow to see Thy will. Open our ears that we may hear Thy Voice more perfectly. Open our mouths that we may sing forth Thy praise. Heal our hidden deformities and create in us the desire for the high, the noble and grand things of life which only Thou canst give. Grant us faith for the days ahead that we may long and work for the day when Thy will is done in earth as it is done in Heaven. Amen.

Peace on Earth

1. O'er the hills of old Ju-de-a, Ho-ly
2. A-bib moon, the spring-time bring-ing, Time of
3. Long a-go the prom-ised bless-ing, An-gel

night so long a-go, Rang the sweet an-gel-ic
flowers and ver-dure bright, Dim-ly shone in western
her-alds sang on high, Looking for-ward to the

cho-rus With ma-jes-tic ebb and flow,
heav-en, On that cloud-less, si-lent night,
com-ing Of the Lord, now ver-y nigh.

"Peace on earth, give God the glo-ry; Peace on earth,—good will to

men," King of kings, a royal Savior; Soon He comes to earth again.

Benediction

HEAVENLY FATHER: We thank Thee for the blessings of this day. We feel it has been good for us to have been here. May the thoughts and impressions of this day linger with us and be a source of joy in the days ahead. Grant that each new day may bring us new joy in Thy Truth, new understanding of Thy will for us, and new strength for Thy service. Forgive us as we turn from our sins. Bless us as we walk before Thee, that all our work may be done in humility and to Thy glory. Amen.

Bid the New Year welcome,
And drop the old from sight;
Gather all your vigor,
Press forward in the fight,
Let this be your motto:
"FOR GOD AND FOR THE RIGHT."

"Every step toward Christ kills a doubt. Every thought, word, and deed for Him carries you away from discouragement."

—Sel.

The Megiddo Message

Celebrating Christmas

and New Year's Day

CHRISTMAS ONCE AGAIN! The old but ever new story never grows wearisome: the story of Mary and Joseph, their journey to Bethlehem, the Babe in the manger, the shepherds on the hillside, the angels, the "Wise Men," the guiding "star." These by their very simplicity never cease to fascinate; the story is never tiresome because of repetition.

But the Christmas narrative is more than a story. Its meaning greatly surpasses the spirit and practices of a commercialized world on a day of pagan origin. It is more than a festal season whose significance is encompassed by a round of secular pleasures and hectic activities. Far more it is than the giving and receiving of gifts or of family reunions.

On that day was born a King, one who was to be the Saviour of His people. So significant was the event and so joyous that angelic beings announced the glad news to the wondering shepherds; and further, an angelic multitude praised and glorified God on the occasion. This is what the first Christmas day meant to the angels.

But fascinating as the Christmas story may be, in his account Luke reminds us very forcibly of the fact that the first Christmas had also its dark clouds. Palestine was an occupied country. The purpose of the census was that the people might be assessed for their taxes to their hated overlords. While the first Christmas had its beauty, its setting had also its ugliness.

The world into which Jesus was born was not unlike our world of today. It was a brutal world, a world of blood, oppression, cruelty; a sad, cynical, morbid world where religions of the day had no power over the lives of men. Fears, disillusionment, superstition and hopelessness possessed the hearts of men. In such a world Jesus grew to manhood and took up His mission when His time had come. He faced the world as it was.

EFFECT OF CHRIST'S MESSAGE

Jesus had a God-given message to humanity, proclaiming His Kingship, His heirship of the coming Kingdom of God. He came to revive hope in the hearts of men and that they might prepare for the better life. The Apostles took up His message. In the early years of the Church the people were thrilled with the greatness and wonder of the Gospel. They were radiant with its power. No call to service for His cause was unheeded, nor was any duty considered a burden. The publishing of the Good News which Jesus brought to men made such a tremendous impact upon His followers that it resulted in an amazing change of life. And His influence was felt even by those who did not acknowledge Him.

The men and women who obeyed the command to preach the tidings of the Kingdom of God were men of radiant and triumphant spirit. They were changed individuals, charged with a new life. There was an entirely new note in their voices, a new song in their hearts, and a new word on their tongues. Like Simeon, they had seen the One who would show the way of salvation. For those who published the Glad Tidings, old things had passed away and all things had become new. In spite of all the cruel persecutions they endured, Christianity triumphed

amazingly in that decadent world. Their zeal for the cause of Christ surpassed all zeal of the world.

This is what Christ's birth meant to the early Church.

What does the birth of Christ mean to us? How shall we observe it?

As Christ came into the world working out His salvation and teaching the way of salvation to men, in what manner can we better honor Him or praise God for His coming than by doing as He did? How can we more fittingly commemorate His birth than by a dedication of our lives to the same ideals for which His life was given? Much of the celebration of Christmas in the world is given to exchanging of gifts; the giving is generally to those of the family circle or best friends. Strange, at the time set to commemorate His birth, men ignore the call of God to serve Him.

Professing to be Christians, it is assumed we want to be Christ-like. We want our lives to be such that God will be well-pleased with them. Nothing would please Him more than a complete consecration to His service. When we utter with the Psalmist, "I delight to do thy will, O my God," and mean it, that is pleasing to God. When we say truthfully, "There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee," it is acceptable to the Almighty. And when, as Jesus declared, we love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves, we are doing that which delights the Eternal.

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call is to all, whether the task to which He calls is great or small. No one can lawfully excuse himself because of a "piece of ground," "five yoke of oxen," other interests, or apparent hindrances.

RETAINING THE MOUNTAINTOP EXPERIENCE

But tomorrow is another day. How shall we meet it? Those lonely shepherds had heard the angels' anthem, had gone to Bethlehem to see the Babe. The excitement over, now they must go back to work, back to the sheep. To hold fast to the high, mountaintop experience is the secret of nobility in living. After their return, so long as the shepherds cherished the memory of the things they saw, it was a song in the night, a vision of better things to come, a bulwark against life's ugliness, and errors.

It was experiences like these in the days of their discipleship that changed the eleven ordinary men into stalwart defenders and promoters of Christ's message. As they held the high moments in memory, they were "not disobedient unto the heavenly vision."

So if there is a high moment, an elevating experience this Christmas day, we shall be greatly benefited if we grasp it firmly and carry it into our varied activities in the days ahead. If we do, then in the moments of disillusionment, the skeptical and rebellious moods which the days often bring, we shall have a joyful, constructive principle by which to live.

The truth about Christ's mission can go with us into the new year. It can be a light of hope to lead us in the days ahead as the bright angelic visitant (spoken of as a "star") guided the "Wise Men" to that holy Child. We too have worshiped, and if we have caught the significance of the event, then life can never be the same again. The impressions of the day will go with us, back to the familiar, ordinary surroundings. We will recall them in the stress and strain of this rapid-moving life and they will enable us to fulfill our mission in this world as did He whose birth we observe.

A MESSAGE FOR THE NEW YEAR

We face a year of reality, uncertainty, trials. We are not so much concerned with world events, for they are beyond our power. If our principal task is to prepare to meet the Lord, then in that preparation the year we enter is freighted with possibilities. This may indeed be the acceptable year of the Lord.

The new year presents us, as it were, with an entrance into the "Land of Beginning Again." We can do the things which last year were neglected, and correct the errors that haunt us. If we have denied our Lord we can return again, provided we have wept bitterly, as did a disciple in former days. At the shore of our daily task the Voice of the Risen Lord is heard, "Lovest thou me?" If our reply is sincere, as was Peter's who had repeatedly denied his Lord, we shall receive the same response, a response to start us forward again.

In pondering the future, one should not overlook the necessity of acquiring a true sense of values. Many people limp along with ideals that are inadequate. At times it may be difficult to decide what are the primary values, those ideas and ideals that should have first claim on our allegiance. But only as one makes an effort to know and places emphasis where it is due, can life become full of meaning, real and abundant. Whatever else we may attain or accomplish, if we lose our soul—"what shall it profit a man?"

For a rich year of progress, a true sense of values is a principal necessity. It is important.

Another requirement for us all is a sense of urgency.

If we could know and see and feel all of a sudden that "the time is short," how it would transform us! How this would cause us to go instantly and do the thing which we might never have another chance to do! For instance, if we knew we had but two weeks, would we let miserable misunderstandings run on neglected, meaning to clear them up some day? Would we keep quarrels alive because we cannot quite make up our mind that now is the day to sacrifice pride and cease all strife? Would we delay to speak that word of appreciation we meant to give our friend some day?

RESOLUTIONS FOR THE NEW YEAR

While it is true that Christian character is not formed on New Year's Day, it is helpful to make resolutions to live a better life. It is a good time for recommitment, a chance to leave some of the old, undesirable self behind. The glowing experience and the impressive lessons of this day will do us little good unless we carry them into our everyday life and put them into practical use. At times of emotional excitement one makes resolves that are good; but great care is needed lest these resolves evaporate in mere feeling. They must be crystallized into some form of action as soon as possible if we are to derive the necessary benefit. The sooner one acts upon a resolution the greater his chances for success.

You may make a contract with yourself to live a transformed life. Periodically you may check up to see how the resolutions you so bravely made are holding. Still solid? Shaking? Shattered? Did the new year make any actual difference? Even if you do not succeed completely you will be better off, for you will gain considerably by a sincere attempt. Your contract with yourself may read something like this:

"I hereby resolve that I will make this the best year of my life. I am through with the past, I will not allow its failures to trouble me. I will meet the present resolutely and face the future bravely.

"Further, I am discarding everything that would interfere with the fulfillment of my resolution. Grudges against others for real or fancied wrongs, hatred, jealousy, dislikes will be banished forever from my mind. I will maintain a right spirit in every trial and disappointment that comes my way. I will go among my fellows with a glad smile, with the light of hope in my eyes, with the assurance that I know in whom I have believed. I will maintain a strong faith, a faith that overcomes the world. I will share this faith freely with others. I will not hesitate to respond to God's call for service. I pledge myself to fulfill these resolutions. This is God's way to a better, more abundant life, and all His ways are pleasantness and peace."

An unknown poet in his lines, "Facing the New Year," expressed similar thoughts in this manner:

"We pledge ourselves:

To follow through the coming year

The light which God gives us:

The light of TRUTH, wherever it may lead;

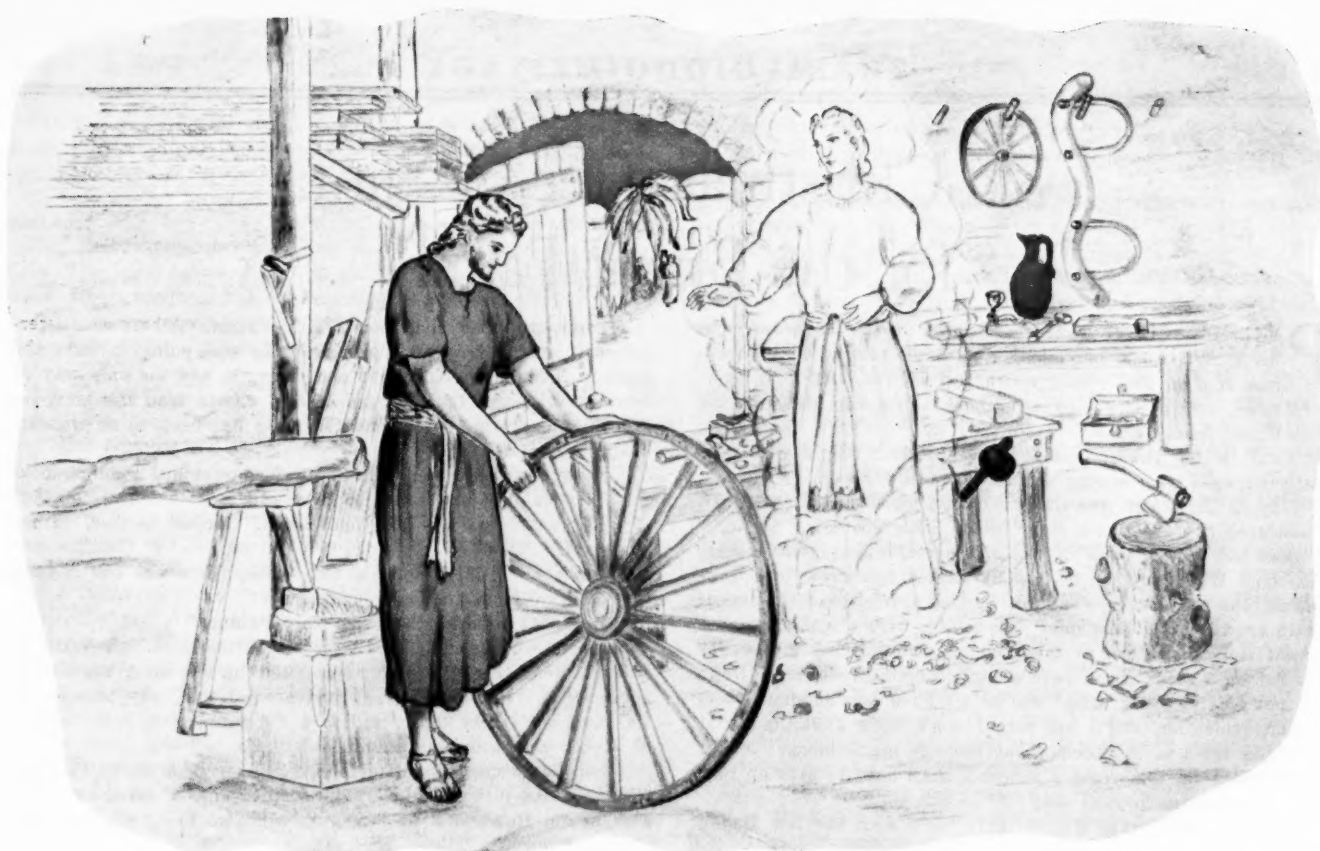
The light of FREEDOM, revealing new opportunities for individual development and social service;

The light of FAITH, opening new visions of the better day to be;

The light of LOVE, daily binding brother to brother and man to God in ever closer bonds of friendship and affection.

Guided by this Light,

We shall go forward to the work of another year with steadfastness and confidence."



JESUS, The Carpenter

WITHIN the carpenter shop of Nazareth the future King of the Ages wields the tools of a trade that belongs to the common people—wields them skillfully as a man of keen intellect and quick perception will; industriously, every movement directed by the vigor and ambition of healthy young manhood; and patiently, as one who, though fields be white to harvest, has learned to bide the Father's will.

And day by day, under Heavenly guidance, the commonplace influences of toil, routine, simple surroundings and quiet living play their part in chiseling and shaping the Man, while the soul of this lowly Nazarene grows and expands, drawing enrichment from every new experience, wisdom from every circumstance of life. The nobility of His character, the patience, kindness, gentleness and love within His soul—already surpassing ordinary ken—are daily strengthened and deepened.

Here is a Youth who comprehends the full purpose and meaning of life, who experiences the boundless joy, the overwhelming majesty, the height and the glory of the Heavenly Father's love, realizing also the depth of the responsibility that rests upon those who undertake to carry out the Father's purpose here on earth, and the weight of responsibility that reposes more than all upon the destined Pattern and Example, the King of all kings!

Thus, while unseen angels guard and protect, the Carpenter works out His salvation, humbly, earnestly, conscientiously, prayerfully. The heights of Perfection have

yet to be reached; there is much work yet to be performed against that day when He must leave forever the familiar surroundings and the security of this carpenter shop to enter upon the career for which He was born—not that of shaping yokes, benches and wagons, but a career that shall turn the current of the stream of history and lift to higher levels the lives of men.

This young Carpenter is keenly aware that He is pressed for time. There is no idleness, no drifting thoughts, no day-dreams as He pursues the humdrum tasks; but faster and faster fly the thinkings of His keen mind, more observant grow His eyes. He must be ready! "O Father, lead me!—not as I will, but as Thou wilt!" That prayer which shall steady Him the last mile of this earthly way is on His lips throughout every one of these commonplace days.

Oh, could we possess the comprehension, the wisdom and the understanding that would enable us to penetrate the soul of this Youth as He stands there erect and clear-eyed behind the carpenter bench! Could we experience for one hour thoughts as high, as holy and as pure as those that course through His clear brain; could our pulse quicken to the joy of His noble aspirations; could our hearts know the height and depth of the love and mercy, the kindness and benevolence that stem from the Heavenly Father and flow over through the soul of Christ His Son—it seems we would be forever lifted above all that is low and mean and base and selfish!

No Christmas Tree or Santa for the Bright Family

PAULINE BRIGHT leaned her elbows on the table, and with her curly head in her hands studied the picture of a Christmas tree on the catalog which had arrived that morning.

"Mother, where does God tell about Christmas trees in the Bible?" she finally asked.

"What in the Bible, Pauline?" asked Mrs. Bright who was busily engaged with sewing a ruffle on a new apron.

"Why, a Christmas tree like the pretty one we had last year. I wondered if there was a story in the Bible about it."

"Dear me, I don't know; I wouldn't be a bit surprised if there were one. When you go to Sunday School tomorrow, ask your teacher, she will know. What are Sunday School teachers for, if not to answer Bible questions?" she added, with a teasing smile.

Aunt Helen, who was at this moment embroidering the outline of a cat on a sofa pillow, gave a little scream of dismay. "Don't put that idea into her head," she said. "I am her Sunday School teacher, remember, and I am sure I don't know anything about Christmas trees in the Bible. That reminds me, I haven't looked up my lesson for tomorrow. I believe I shall have to give up that class, it is getting beyond me."

"Then, my dear," said Mrs. Bright, "we'll wait and ask Daddy about it when he comes home for lunch."

Pauline's eyes shone. "'Course Daddy'll know, he knows 'bout everything in the Bible; but I thought teachers did too." There was disappointment in her voice. With this she contented herself and became absorbed in the new catalog, fancying all the nice things she would ask Santa to bring, while Mother and Aunt Helen busied themselves with the completion of the ruffle and the cat.

The bright sunlight streamed in at the slightly frosted windowpanes in the little sewing-room.

"I wonder if this is a true bias?" queried mother, holding up a width of pink percale for closer scrutiny.

"I believe it will do well enough," was Aunt Helen's observing reply. "Mercy me! I just can't get over that child; everything she sets her eyes on she wants to know if it is in the Bible. Grace dear, I am just thankful I am not in your shoes."

"Pauline does ask unusual questions," Mrs. Bright agreed, "and it is not too easy to find answers for all the questions a five-year-old can ask, but she is quite easily satisfied."

Helen McMartin looked very sober. "I'm afraid her father's recent craze for discussing the Bible is responsible for this."

"I suppose it is, in a way," replied Mrs. Bright. "You know children are creatures of imitation."

"Honestly now, Grace, hasn't Albert's illness affected his mind? You know he has never been the same. I don't believe in all his thirty years he opened a Bible before this happened. It's just a miracle he is alive, though; three weeks of such suffering and delirium is enough to leave anyone a little queer for awhile. Do you realize everyone is talking about it?" Aunt Helen was tense.

SPRINGDALE was one of those sociable little towns where the inhabitants made everybody's business their business, and news traveled fast, especially bad news.

Mrs. Bright's face clouded—to be sure these very thoughts had once given her an uncomfortable feeling, but things had changed since she had learned the reason for her husband's constant reading of the Bible. Mrs. Bright thoughtfully laid her sewing down. "No, Aunt, Albert's mind is perfectly clear; but how people do talk! You know, anyone who devotes himself to the Bible in this day and age would certainly be looked upon as being peculiar."

"It happened like this," began Mrs. Bright, "Albert was determined if ever he recovered his health he was going to serve the Lord with all his mind, might and strength, and the only way of knowing what the Lord wanted of him was to read His sixty-six Letters. He greatly enjoys studying, and has made some wonderful discoveries."

"Mommy, why are there two Santas?" interrupted Pauline, looking questioningly up at her mother.

"Why, dear, there is just one Santa," replied mother, rather surprised.

"But, Mommy, there must be two, 'cause there was one in each toy shop we went to yesterday."

"Oh, no! That was the same one, Pauline."

"But one was taller and his voice wasn't the same," she insisted.

Aunt Helen came to the rescue, and in her most reassuring voice began, "Pauline, dear, it just seemed that way because he was under different lights and in a different room, so of course he looked and sounded different—"

"Then Santa must be awful forgetful, Auntie," broke in Pauline, "'cause I had just told him what I wanted and he asked me right over again. How could he remember what to bring all the little girls and boys?"

"Never mind, Pauline!" mother commanded, "you sit right over here and be quiet. You must not interrupt Aunt Helen and me when we are talking."

Pauline obeyed reluctantly, still pondering the queer situation which was beyond her comprehension.

"The toes of this cat are horrid to make," said Aunt Helen, concentrating on the embroidering. "I was just about to ask you, Grace, if Albert has consulted the Reverend Bates concerning his studying?"

"No, I do not believe he has, and I am sure he has no intentions of doing so," continued Mrs. Bright. "He has learned more since reading his Bible than he did in all the time he went to church."

Aunt Helen shook a warning finger. "First thing you know your family will have no religion at all. I tell you, that is what happens to these folks who go off on their own hook. Good land! look at that pile of books out there on the library table; I just took a quick glance at them when I came in. Why, Grace, he must have literature there of every creed and denomination."

"Almost," agreed Mrs. Bright. "The worst of it is, that no two authors agree; but we are not giving up, something will turn up one of these days."

Aunt Helen looked horrified. "Don't tell me you are in on this wild goose chase, too?"

"No, I am not on a wild goose chase, Auntie, but I am a bit interested in his findings. Really the Bible is the most interesting book I ever read; such depth of meaning and inspiration. I have even thrown away all trashy novels and such that we had around."

This was really something for Mrs. Bright, for she had been a regular bookworm with a craving for light reading.

Helen McMartin could take it no longer, she dropped her embroidery into her bag; she was the picture of stark amazement. "Dear me!" she gasped, looking at the clock and glad for an excuse to make her departure. "I think I had better be going home. You know the Ladies' Aid meets at my house this afternoon, and I must have a few dainties on hand," she said, as she arose to go.

"I did not realize it was getting so late myself," said Mrs. Bright, as she offered her a helping hand. "Just see it starting to snow! I dare say we'll have a white Christmas."

"By the way, Grace, have you done your Christmas shopping?"

"No I haven't, Aunt. Three weeks ahead is much too soon for a last minute shopper like me, you know," replied the latter. "Come over again when you can. I do enjoy our little morning chats."

"I have always enjoyed them too," responded Aunt Helen in a tone that suggested things would not be just the same after this.

Her niece watched her across the street and into her own house, then turned and hastened back to the kitchen to prepare the noon meal. Albert would be home almost any time now, as he was doing some carpenter work for a friend who lived on the same street. Meanwhile Pauline stood looking out of the window.

"HERE comes Daddy!" she announced gleefully, dancing to the door and opening it. "Oh Daddy, I've got something to ask you!"

"Now what might it be, my little elf?" said her father laughingly, as he hung up his coat.

"I want to know if there's a story in the Bible 'bout a Christmas tree, a pretty one like we had last year? Mommy and Aunt Helen didn't know, but I knew you'd know, Daddy."

Her father looked perplexed; he scratched his head and wrinkled his brow. "Ah—well now—ah, let me think—" he could not let her down, since she placed so much confidence in him. "Let me see; where is our Bible dictionary? Oh, I believe Aunt Helen borrowed our new one, and the old one's upstairs in the attic."

"Who was the first person to have a Christmas tree, Daddy?"

"My land! Pauline, I don't know. What has gotten into you today?" said her father, unconsciously wiping his forehead. Then noticing his little girl's disappointment, he added, "But just you wait, we'll find it yet, just you see if we don't."

"How are you getting along with Herbert Preston's new kitchen?" came mother's cheery voice from the kitchen.

"Expect to finish it next week if all goes well. Grace, I believe I made a find this morning. I tried my best to work up a little Bible discussion with Herbert. He says he has never taken the time to study the Book himself, but his father has read it for over thirty years. And Herb says if anyone can answer my questions, he can. He asked me to come over some evening and talk with his father. He knows he would be delighted to have us."

"That would be just wonderful!" exclaimed Mrs. Bright. "There are so many things we don't understand."

"But wait, wait till you hear this," he cautioned with a broad smile. "It seems that the elderly Mr. Preston keeps Christmas in the spring. Isn't that the strangest thing you ever heard?"

"Christmas in the spring?" gasped Grace, setting the cherry pie down on the table as if frightened that she would drop it. "Don't tell me someone has instigated a new day to keep Christmas?"

"According to Herb it isn't a new day; and his father has good solid proof for it, right from the Bible."

"But, Albert, it hardly seems possible all Christendom is wrong."

"I know, Grace, and he'll have to produce proof before I will take that one down. Anyway I am going to investigate thoroughly and find out just what there is to it. What do you say we go over to Ernest Preston's this evening?"

"Perfectly all right with me," agreed Grace.

THAT evening when the three Brights stepped out into the chill air, soft, thick flakes of snow were still gently falling.

"Oh look! Christmas is in the air," exclaimed Pauline in delighted animation. Santa had promised her a nice red sled.

"Yes, looks like we'll have snow for Christmas," said father. "Suits me, just so long as we don't get snowed in."

"It just spoils my favorite carol if we don't have snow," laughed mother. "I love to sing of the poor shepherds keeping watch over their sheep on a cold winter's night."

"This little white house all lit up over there is Mr. Preston's," explained Mr. Bright as they crossed the street. "I can't help but wonder what he can get out of the Bible to prove his theory on Christmas in the spring."

"Maybe he'll know all about Christmas trees," ventured Pauline.

"We shall soon find out," said Mrs. Bright, as she rang the doorbell.

"Come in! come in! Good evening, folks, I am glad to see you. And if here isn't little Pauline!" It was Herb Preston speaking.

In the cozy living room into which they were ushered, a kindly-faced, white-haired man was seated near a large lamp, reading his Bible. He looked up, rose to his feet and extended his hand; introductions were soon over and the errand made clear.

"Do I have time? I always have time to talk about God's Word. The only trouble is that there are so few who wish to listen or talk about it. This is a privilege; I might even say, a rare treat. So you are interested in knowing where I get my proof that Christmas is in the spring? No doubt you are familiar with the account of the Nativity given in Luke?"

"Yes, indeed!" smiled Mrs. Bright, "just this afternoon Pauline and I rehearsed that very chapter."

"That is fine," replied Mr. Preston. "Perhaps the little girl could tell us the story about the shepherds." (Her father gave her a meaningful look and she proceeded to tell the story. When she had finished, she again seated herself by her mother.)

"Thank you, Pauline!" said Mr. Preston, obviously well-pleased. "Well now, did it ever occur to you folks that shepherds would not be out on the plains in December watching their sheep?"

"No, I never thought of that. But I believe Bethlehem's is a much milder climate than ours," was Mr. Bright's quick response.

"That is true, but December in Palestine is the cold, rainy season of the year. The sheep are brought in from the hills in the early part of November and are not brought forth to graze again until the last of February or the first of March. *McClintock and Strong's Encyclopedia* verifies this. And here is another thing. You know Christ's birth marks the close of B. C. and the starting of A. D. Now what do you call the week between December 25th and January 1st?"

The guests looked at each other in astonishment. After a moment Mrs. Bright spoke: "I get what you mean: Christmas and New Year's Day should be the same day. As it is in this present arrangement we have a week that is neither B. C. nor A. D."

"That's right, you have the idea."

"Strange," said Mr. Bright, looking at his wife, "that we never thought of that before. But I do not see why the whole world celebrate December 25th. They must have some good reason."

"PARDON me, folks, there's the doorbell. Herb, will you see who is there?"

"Why, how do you do, Mrs. McMartin, come right in."

"Good evening, Herb. I thought I would just drop over and—for land's sake! If it isn't Albert and Grace! this is a surprise, I had no idea you were here. How did this all happen?"

"Mr. Preston here, was explaining why he keeps Christmas in the spring," responded Albert.

"Well of all things, Christmas in the spring! How peculiar!" she commented sarcastically, a little reluctant to accept the proffered chair and casting a disapproving look at Grace, who in turn colored slightly.

"I can't stay long. I just wanted to ask you, Herb, if you would mind getting me a Christmas tree when you go for yours; but, mercy me, I don't want to wait till next spring, so just forget it."

"I am sorry, Mrs. McMartin, but we don't believe in having a Christmas tree any time. You know it is just a shame the way our young forests are slaughtered to provide those trees," said Herb, who had always been opposed to this custom. "Mrs. McMartin, do you know what the Bible says about Christmas trees?"

"No indeed!" replied Aunt Helen, "and I fancy I have read my Bible as much as most people, too."

Pauline's eyes brightened with excitement as she whispered to her mother, "He's going to tell us about Christmas trees, Mommy."

"Father, you have your Bible open. Will you read Jer. 10: 2-4?" And Mr. Ernest Preston read slowly: "Thus saith the Lord,

Learn not the way of the heathen, . . . For the customs of the people are vain: for one cutteth a tree out of the forest, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. They deck it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, that it move not."

For a moment the visitors were silent.

"Doesn't sound very good for our Christmas tree, that's sure," said Mr. Bright, at last recovering from the shock.

"No, it doesn't," added Mrs. Bright thoughtfully.

"Then are we heathens 'cause we do it?" was Pauline's grave question. "But what are heathens, Daddy?"

"Here's Webster's Dictionary," said Herb before her father had time to think, "that will give you the answer."

Mr. Bright took the dictionary and thumbed through the pages. "H-e-a- here it is. 'Heathen—an unconverted member of a people that does not acknowledge the God of the Bible; a pagan.'"

Aunt Helen's eyes snapped, "I have always observed December 25th with a Christmas tree and a clear conscience and shall continue to do so. You can't tell me the churches are all wrong." Aunt Helen was sensitive when her Bible knowledge was questioned or her cherished customs and traditions endangered.

MR. PRESTON leaned forward in his chair. "Mr. Bright, you said you believed there was a good reason for keeping Dec. 25th; well, the whole world commemorates it thus because they have all been turned away from truth to fables, as Paul in II Timothy 4: 2-4 said they would be."

"If the actual date has been lost in the darkness of the past, what does it matter which day we keep?" put in Aunt Helen, icily.

"It may surprise you," continued Mr. Preston, "to learn that December 25th was the most celebrated of pagan feast days; all pagan nations had their chief feast on this day: and it was supposedly the birthday of the Romans' sun-god, Mithra, also. The so-called Christian Church at first refused to recognize this pagan celebration, but to win the confidence and approval of the pagan hordes they changed Christ's birthday from the spring to December 25th. As a consequence, they gained thousands of converts. It was a season of revelry and extreme wickedness."

Aunt Helen was highly indignant. "Suppose it is a heathen feast day; we turned it into a Christian festival and are observing it as such, are we not?"

"Now Aunty," responded Albert, "do you really think we are celebrating it in the right manner today?"

"Oh, pretty nearly—of course people have different ideas about what is right and what is wrong."

"But, Mrs. McMartin," pleaded Ernest Preston, "just look at the way the masses are observing Christ's birth, spending millions and millions of dollars for foolish trinkets, etc., such extravagance! feasting, drinking, reveling, with no thought of God or His Son; parents teaching the Santa Claus lie to their children, without the slightest feeling of guilt. Consequently, Christmas to the children means Santa Claus, gifts, a big dinner complete with plenty of nuts and candies, instead of a day to honor our Saviour."

"So long as people stay sober and don't go to extremes, I believe mirth and jollity is approved in the sight of the Lord," retorted Aunt Helen, fairly bristling.

At the mention of Santa Claus, Pauline was wide awake, and in a second had slid off her chair and was standing by her father's side, her eyes wide with wonder. "Daddy, is Santa Claus pagan, too? Is he a lie? You wouldn't tell me a lie, would you, Daddy? You and Mommy and Aunt Helen all told me there was a Santa Claus." Her faith in the dear red-nosed old fellow was fearfully shaken. "Daddy, you helped me write that letter; just like you did last year. And then I got everything I asked for. Won't I this year?"

For a moment her father was too overcome with mortification to answer, but caught her up on his knee. "Pauline dear, it was Daddy who played the Santa. I have your letter right here in my pocket," he confessed as he produced the offensive letter. "There'll

be no more Santa coming to our house." And then, addressing his wife, "Oh, Grace, why did we, how could we be so ignorant as to instill this falsehood in her mind?" There was emotion in his voice.

Grace composed herself, wiping away the tears that stole down her own cheeks. "Oh, Albert, if only we could have realized we were planting a seed of deception."

Pauline was genuinely worried. What next could happen in her small world? First it was her beautiful Christmas tree, and now—Santa Claus.

The Prestons were deeply touched at the outcome of this once seemingly insignificant falsehood.

Completely exasperated, Aunt Helen arose unsteadily to her feet. "I must be going," she said coldly. "I should not have stayed this long. Albert and Grace, I hope this has taught you a lesson, not to go prying into every religion. But how in the name of the sun, moon, or stars can you call this religion, breaking up family confidences, and exposing their secrets?"

"The sooner we find out wherein we err, the better," responded Albert. "How could we honor Christ's birth with a falsehood? Just a minute, Aunty," called Albert as his aunt opened the door to leave. "I'll see you home."

"No thank you, I'm perfectly capable of getting there myself. Good night." The door closed with a window-rattling slam.

"I hope you'll not take offense at her manner. Aunty just cannot or rather will not tolerate opposition in any form," Mrs. Bright apologized for her Aunt Helen.

MR. PRESTON took up the conversation. "Do you know that England observed New Year's Day on March 25th until 1752?"

"But that is simple history. I understood you had evidence from the Bible. How do I know that March 25th is any more right than December 25th?" inquired Mr. Bright.

Ernest Preston smiled, "I was just getting to that. Don't think for an instant that God would leave us in ignorance concerning the true date of the birth of His well-beloved Son, when it was of such importance that He sent a host of angels to announce it. Mrs. Bright, I see you have your Bible. Will you kindly read us Exodus 12: 2?"

Mrs. Bright drew a pencil and pad from her handbag and wrote down the reference before she proceeded to read, as she would want to read the verse again at home. Then she read: "This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you."

"There, you see, it is the first month of the God-given calendar. And now will you please read for us Exodus 13: 4 where we shall find the name of the month?"

"This day came ye out in the month Abib," read Mrs. Bright.

"Not only that," said Mr. Preston, "we are commanded in Deuteronomy 16: 1, 'Observe the month Abib.'"

Mr. Bright looked puzzled, "How is anyone going to know when this Abib begins?"

"I was just going to ask that same question," said Mrs. Bright.

"Let me explain. Bible time is lunar time, that is, it is governed by the moon. The first new moon after the vernal or spring equinox is always the beginning of the month Abib. *Abib* is a Hebrew word meaning the 'month of flowers, the month of green ears, the spring or sprouting month.'"

"I can see now," Mrs. Bright exclaimed. "And how much more appropriate to commemorate Christ's birth in the spring when everything is aglow with new life."

"Even the birds take up the joyful strain and warble till you'd think their little throats would burst, and the air is so balmy it is almost impossible to stay indoors. And above all else, it is Biblical," admitted Mr. Bright.

"Here is another thing I wish to call your attention to. You remember back in the days when Saul was king, David told Jonathan that he must run to Bethlehem to keep the new moon feast there with his family. David was obeying that same com-

mand in Ps. 81:3, 4. And we read that when Jesus was twelve years old He and His parents went up after the custom of the feast (Luke 2:41, 42). Was not Jesus born just twelve years previously? Most certainly He was."

"My! my! where did you get all this information?" asked Mr. Bright in admiration. "Did you study this all out yourself?"

"No indeed!" replied Mr. Preston, handing him a small magazine which lay on the table. The only reason why I can give this Bible explanation is that I have had an excellent teacher. This MEGIDDO MESSAGE and other literature which I receive from the Megiddo Mission at Rochester, N. Y., have been my only instructors. In all my years of reading different faiths, I find they are the only ones who have the Bible truths."

On they talked far into the night, forgetting the fatigue of the day, the Bible growing in wonderment to their souls.

"You have certainly cleared up this Christmas question for us and we're going to look into things more deeply," said Mr. Bright, as he and Grace prepared the sleeping Pauline for their trip home.

"Do come again," pleaded Mr. Preston. "I have enjoyed every minute of it."

"Thank you, we most certainly will. Good night."

AFTER almost three weeks of intensive study the Brights were fully convinced they had found that for which they so eagerly prayed. Frequent visits with Mr. Preston strengthened their faith.

Neighbors who chanced by just before Christmas, stared in amazement and wondered if they were seeing straight when they could behold no elaborately decorated tree in their large picture

window—for the Brights' tree had long been the rival of the town.

As stories would have it, this was all the result of Albert Bright's mental condition. But would-be friends who dropped in to satisfy their curiosity realized the Brights had something they themselves lacked, and could not help being impressed by their hopeful and happy faces.

Strangely enough, Grace Bright had survived the ordeal of breaking the news to her Aunt Helen, a task from which she almost shrank, who in turn would have nothing to do with this strange doctrine.

But this crisp morning she could not refrain from making one last appeal for a Christmas tree on behalf of Pauline.

"But, Grace," insisted Aunt Helen, "think what you are doing. Remember this is the first Christmas you have not had one, and wouldn't it be better for Pauline's sake to have just a little tree?"

"No indeed!" said Mr. Bright with determination, "we are ashamed of our former foolishness. We are not going to have even a little one; not one grain of incense will we lay on the pagan altar."

Aunt Helen was almost but not quite speechless with exasperation. Her eyes flashed. "But this innocent child," pointing to Pauline, "you are depriving her of all that Christmas could mean or does mean to her."

And before Auntie could say another word, Pauline, quietly listening, decided she would put in a word for herself.

"Oh Auntie, I do not want a Christmas tree, 'cause it's pagan. Daddy says when our new Christmas comes in the spring, we are all going to take a nice long trip to Rochester and see the good people and everything Mr. Preston told us about. Won't that be ever so much better than Santa Claus and a Christmas tree?"

The Comparison of Time

For the benefit of our readers who desire to become more fully acquainted with the comparison of time we have prepared parts of both calendars. Bible time being lunar time these dates will fall on different days in different years. For example, Abib 1st fell on April 14, 1953, and April 4, 1954. The Bible year contains 354 days, or 12 lunations of the moon; but in a cycle of 19 years an intercalary month (Ve-Adar) is seven times introduced to render the average length of the year nearly correct.

BIBLE TIME

ROMAN TIME

No.	Name	Days	English mo.	Products	No.	Name	From whence derived
I	Abib or Nisan	30	March, April	Barley ripe	I	January	Named after the Roman god Janus.
II	Iyar or Zif	29	April, May	Barley harvest	II	February	<i>Februa</i> , Rom. festival of purification.
III	Sivan	30	May, June	Wheat harvest	III	March	1st mo. old Rom. year., from Mar. 25.
IV	Thammuz	29	June, July	Early vintage	IV	April	From <i>aperire</i> , "to open"—of buds.
V	Ab	30	July, August	Ripe figs	V	May	From the Roman goddess <i>Maia</i> .
VI	Elul	29	August, Sept.	General vintage	VI	June	From the Roman goddess <i>Juno</i> .
VII	Tisri	30	Sept., Oct.	Plowing & sowing	VII	July	Named after Julius Cæsar.
VIII	Bul	29	Oct., Nov.	Latter grapes	VIII	August	Named after Augustus Cæsar.
IX	Chisleu	30	Nov., Dec.	Snow	IX	September	Taken from <i>septem</i> : meaning seven.
X	Tebeth	29	Dec., Jan.	Wet	X	October	Taken from <i>octo</i> : meaning eight.
XI	Shebat	30	Jan., Feb.	Winter figs	XI	November	Taken from <i>novem</i> : meaning nine.
XII	Adar	29	Feb., March	Almond blossoms	XII	December	Taken from <i>decem</i> : meaning ten.
Ve-Adar — INTERCALARY							

ABIB 1st is CHRISTMAS and NEW YEAR'S DAY, corresponding to March 25 of Roman time. Day begins 6 o'clock the evening of March 24. This day the Megiddo Mission celebrates as Christ's birthday and the beginning of the New Year. Proof, Exodus 12:2; 13:4.

From our own experience, and from the many letters we receive, we know that people are likely to be bothered in distinguishing between Bible and Roman time. They do not see why Bible time comes on different dates of our Roman time. The subject becomes very plain when we investigate it. Bible time is *lunar* time or governed by the moon. The vernal equinox, when the days and nights are equal, always comes about the 21st of March, sometimes varying a few days.

The first new moon after the vernal equinox is always the beginning of the month of Abib, sometimes called Nisan. Some years there is a new moon near or soon after the vernal equinox, and then the year begins in March; and again the new moon does not occur until in April. The vernal equinox occurs this year on March 17 and the first new moon after that date will be March 24. As the Bible time commences always in the evening, counting from six in the evening until six the next evening (Lev. 23:32), and not as we count Roman time, from midnight to midnight, the first of Abib this year will commence the evening of March 24 and last until the evening of March 25; or the anniversary of Christ's birth will be Abib 1st and will occur on the evening of March 24 of Roman time.

Christ

HIS BIRTH

RESULTS

"We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth."

IN OUR troubled world of today, some six hundred million persons of more than two hundred major denominations and innumerable sects profess allegiance to Jesus Christ.

It is certain that there is a sound historical basis for Christianity. A writer of note has truly said, "I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, and all the navies that were ever built, and all the parliaments that ever sat, and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as has that one solitary life."

Yet in spite of these realities, familiarity with His life and teachings convinces us that amid the vast confusion of so-called Christian sects, and the world-wide lip-service paid to His name, the real, the historic Jesus Christ has been lost. Lost, because His nature and personality are invariably misrepresented; lost, because His mission is misunderstood; lost, because His moral and prophetic teachings are everywhere rejected; lost, because creedal differences and racial and political hatreds make a mockery of Him who said, "I and my Father are one," and who prayed of His followers, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us."

Certain it is that this is not the Christian era. If we ever discover the real Jesus Christ, it will not be in a religious world which has become a veritable Tower of Babel, but in the sacred Volume which reveals all we know of His life and work and the meaning of it all—the Bible.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise."

It is no doubt true that we could work out our salvation with no knowledge of the circumstances of the beginning of the Incomparable Life. Yet we are thankful that these circumstances are a matter of revelation and record. God does not deprive us of beauty—He floods us, surrounds us with it—and the age-old story of the Nativity adds a beauty and sweetness to the Gospel without which we should feel infinitely poorer.

His birth was not that of a God made flesh—the primary point on which nominal Christianity diverges from the truth of the Scriptures—but of a human child, miraculously conceived but completely man, to be proved and tempted in all points like His brethren. Of His family we know little. His mother was mistress of the first Christian home and gave us the first Christian song. The references in Scripture all point to a woman of soul purity, of lowly obedience, of simple faith. Fittingly the discerning God chose her to be the mother of His Son, although He never once commanded or sanctioned the superstitious worship which is paid to her by so large a portion of the "Church Universal."

The familiar, ever-lovely story of angels, shepherds, and manger, need not be repeated here. For, after all, it

was but a necessary beginning. Had the Holy Child never progressed beyond His holy childhood, His life would have been wasted. Infancy can be a tender and beautiful thing, but character is developed and tested in the sterner years of manhood.

Of His early life nothing is known, except for the well-known incident of the Passover visit to Jerusalem at the age of twelve. It can only be supposed that He was subjected to the natural influences of a religious and morally superior Jewish family of the time, of synagogue and school, of a village at once quiet and yet close to the thronging traffic on one of the great thoroughfares of that age; and finally of the work of a carpenter, for such He was, until fully prepared for His public ministry.

"Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age."

It is not the purpose in this article to review in detail the earthly ministry of our Lord. That has been done many, many times, and still we turn to the Gospels for the story at its best. Regarding the purpose of His earthly mission, so-called Christianity has made the second of its basic errors. Contrary to popular belief, He was not sent to cancel an ancient and unjust debt by the sacrifice of Himself for the sins of the whole world, but His purpose was to work out His own salvation and to teach His people a way of salvation and leave a perfect example of life. Nor did He seek to establish a purely spiritual Kingdom which was to spread and grow in the hearts of men until the angel's song should be fulfilled. The Kingdom of Heaven, which was the central theme of His preaching, was to be literal, tangible—and far future. It was "at hand" in the person of its King, but far off in point of its actual establishment.

This was not what the Jewish nation of His day wanted, any more than the Gentile world wants it today. When their dreams of temporal restoration were shattered, the high moral tone of His teaching and His constant and insistent demand for absolute honesty, sincerity and purity, had no attraction for the masses, and His following melted away. His Messianic claims, together with His disregard for the forms and taboos which encrusted the national religion, gained Him the active enmity of the leaders and led to His tragic death on the cross.

From the beginning it is clear that Jesus conceived of His work, not as that of a rabbi, nor even as that of a prophet, but as nothing less than the Messiah foreshadowed and promised to the people of God in the Old Testament Scriptures. When the high priest challenged Him under oath to confess His kingly claims, though He had been silent against all the fabricated charges of His trial, against this challenge—fundamental and essential as it was—He could not hold His peace, and His admission of the claims was His own death warrant.

The final act in the great drama of this wonderful life was carried out at a place outside Jerusalem, called Gethsemane, or Calvary. Here Jesus, the sacrifice of His own will perfected, was crucified between two outlaws; and

RESURRECTION RETURN

before the sun set on that day of infamy His tortured body was laid in the rock-hewn sepulcher of Joseph the Councillor, and with it all the hopes of the little band who had best understood His teachings and followed Him from Capernaum to Gethsemane. This was—for them—the deepest of despair.

“Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.”

The Resurrection is one of the facts of history which will not down. After reviewing the evidence dispassionately, disbelief in the miracle would seem far more difficult than belief. No plausible explanation of the facts—of the empty tomb; of the reports and convictions of the disciples, who claimed to have seen and talked with Jesus in human form, especially of the case of Paul; of the change in their feelings and the revival of the work begun by the Teacher; of the consequent foundation of the Christian Church—has ever been given except that of the record: that after His death Jesus entered by physical resurrection and later ascension upon a new course of life and a new course of activity. Without the resurrection as well as the life and death of Jesus, true historical Christianity could never have come into existence; by it He became the Founder of the Church and the dominating personality of the ages.

As the rays of the sun that first Easter changed night into day for those who would believe, the Resurrection turned darkness into everlasting light. It can be said that Hope itself was nailed to the cross, buried, and Hope rose again, to spring eternal in the hearts of men. God is not and never has been a God of the dead, but of the living. The miracle of that far-off morning is our assurance that death, inevitable as it is, need not be the end; that if we share our Example's death to sin, “we shall grow into him by a resurrection like his.”

“This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.”

Of His final Judean ministry the *Encyclopedia* tells under the caption, *Closing Period*. How little man knows! It is true that, even to His closest followers, that last journey to Jerusalem was apparently the beginning of the end; in the perspective of history we see that this dramatic chapter, culminating in the Ascension, was the end of the beginning. For at this point the preliminary phase gives way to reality, when in the presence of His Father He receives His crown of immortal life and glory. His self-mastery complete, His worth proved, He enters into His reward, which means not eternal rest but a mightier work to do. His kingly training now begins in earnest, under immortal instructors. “As I also overcame,” He said in His last message to men, “and am set down with my Father in His throne.”

What a school-room! What would we give to know the details of the schooling He has enjoyed these nearly two thousand years? What would we give for a glimpse of the glory which surrounds Him as He studies in some far-off, unknown, heavenly world?

We cannot know, we cannot even surmise or imagine; yet we shall know, if faithful to Him, some glad day, by and by. For both the knowledge and the glory will come to earth, borne by the returning King, to be shared with all who have made themselves worthy. Our hope, and the hope of the world, is in Christ alone: not a shadowy, sorrowful, sentimental figure out of the past, nor yet a sacrificed divinity, but the real Christ, the glorified Christ, the returning Saviour and King.

It might seem at first thought almost a demotion to leave the presence and the throne of the Father for the task of cleaning up a sadly bedraggled minor planet and ruling it eternally. But the second thought assures us that this is His place, this is His destiny, the work for which He was born so many years ago, and for which He has been training. For the immortals where He now dwells He can do little or nothing; for earth's groping, stumbling, perishing millions He can do much. Humanity needs Him as never before, and He will not fail their need.

The day and hour of the Saviour's return is wisely hidden from us, yet we believe with all our heart that it is near, even at the very doors. Maranatha—the Lord is coming! When that Day dawns, earth has had time enough; the firstfruits are ripe for the harvest; the wickedness of a world-wide Babylon, fully-ripe, cries out for the sharp sickle of the cleansing judgments of God. It is the beginning of an end.

A new order must be instituted. This will be a work of subjugation, elimination, and education. The proclamation will go forth: “Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgment is come.” The chief obstacle to the establishing of the Kingdom of Christ, the unjust rulers and the incorrigible element, must be forcibly removed by the Battle of Armageddon. Then will follow a campaign of universal education in which trained instructors will traverse the entire earth, informing the inhabitants of the New Order and granting them the opportunity to come over on the Lord's side. All who submit shall have a part in that righteous, peaceful reign of a thousand years under officers of peace and exactors of righteousness.

Now we see through a glass, darkly; we strive to place things in their proper relationship, and the God who looks down with compassion on our fumbling efforts gives the light we need and wisdom for the day. We honor Jesus our King with the best that our small hearts and stammering tongues can give; but we shall never know the full splendor of that Incomparable Life until the tapestry of history is turned over and we see, perhaps with some surprise, the completed design in all its dazzling beauty. Then, and in a grander, wider, deeper and higher sense than we have imagined, we shall see the place in the Divine pattern of the Babe of Bethlehem, the Man of Galilee, Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews, Messiah and Son of God.

Observance of the New Passover

TRULY it is a cause for gratitude to Almighty God that we, of all people, know without a lingering doubt that the 13th day of the month Abib (beginning this year the evening of April 5) is the true anniversary of the night in which Jesus met with His disciples and inaugurated the Christian Passover. The evening of April 5 ends the 12th of Abib and begins the 13th, for the day in Bible time is reckoned "from even unto even," as we are informed in Leviticus 23:32.

Jesus instituted this New Passover to take the place of the old Jewish Passover of the 14th of Abib (Lev. 23:5). This is made plain in John 13:1, 2, "Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of the world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended . . ." This was the new Supper, the Lord's Supper, the bread and juice of the grape. It was ended before the regular Jewish Passover, which was always observed on the 14th of Abib; and here Jesus was meeting with His disciples in the evening of the beginning of the 13th of Abib.

History informs us that according to the example which the Apostle Paul established, as he had "received of the Lord" (I Cor. 11:23) and the record he left, the Lord's Supper was always partaken in the evening; and thus it will be observed by all true Christians. We quote: "It is evident from St. Paul's words and practice that in the apostolic church the administration took place after our Lord's pattern, in the evening. . . . The evening celebration lingered on for awhile, but it was gradually given up and entirely ceased by the fourth century."

How wonderful this evidence! Gradually that great power, "the man of sin" that was to arise, as foretold in II Thess. 2:3, 4, changed it from a yearly observance in the evening of the 13th of Abib to a Sunday morning practice; (supper in the morning!) thus proving true God's Word that the people would turn away their ears from the truth and be turned unto fables (II Tim. 4:4). Only a few held on to the truth until the Apostasy set in, and that few continued to observe it in the evening.

What satisfaction it should afford us to know that we are keeping the anniversary of the very night in which Jesus said He would no longer eat with them until He should eat anew with His disciples in the Kingdom of His Father. Of course, for us, it is more essential to realize what we must do to be worthy of this greatest of all privileges than simply to know the correct time. However, both are necessary; and we *know* we have the right time. We have the Scripture for it. So we will observe the time as given by Paul in I Cor. 11:23, as before mentioned: "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread: and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take eat: . . . this do in remembrance of me."

BY OBEDIENCE TO TRUTH WE EAT THE SPIRITUAL CHRIST

This is one of the wonderful truths the Apostle delivered to us, so we too could keep it as they did, so we could renew our covenant and say, "All these things will we do, and be obedient." Furthermore, it is profitable to realize what the bread represents, and also what the juice of the grape means. They represent this wonderful Word of Truth, the Word of God.

As a matter of fact, the members of the Megiddo Mis-

sion Church realize when they partake of the emblems on the anniversary of the "same night in which he was betrayed" that they are doing it in remembrance of Christ's wonderful example of obedience, and they covenant to follow in His steps and be obedient to His law, *in all things*. It has no reference whatever to the literal flesh and blood of Jesus.

The Prophet Jeremiah exclaimed: "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts" (Jer. 15:16). As we must eat the literal food to provide physical strength, so also must we keep eating the spiritual food to keep up our spiritual strength. The Apostle Paul says in I Cor. 10:12, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." We may think we are standing, but must watch in order to stand firm as true soldiers of Jesus Christ. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." If we eat these words of eternal life we shall have the needed strength.

He says: "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread" (verses 15-17). If we hope to become members of Christ's body, we must partake of the spiritual Christ, the truth, spoken of in the first four verses of this 10th chapter. In chapter 12:12 we find it made plain that all true believers compose the "body of Christ." "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." It has no reference to the physical body of Christ. This one body is composed of Christ the Head, and the different members the Church.

THERE MUST BE NO DIVISIONS

Said Paul in I Cor. 11:18, "First of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." This *bread* represents unity, not divisions. The Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles all speak the same things, and so must His Church. To eat the Lord's Supper means to be of one mind on every principle of truth. We must all be partakers of this one bread, the spiritual flesh of Christ. It is what Jesus meant when He said in John 6:53, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you"; also in 4:34, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work."

The Lord has a table, and every good thing is set upon it: the glad news of the Kingdom and what we must do to be worthy of it. But we cannot eat of this table and also of the table containing things in opposition to God, and expect to saved. We must make a sharp cleavage from the thoughts and desires of the flesh. As Paul says in I Cor. 5:8, "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." When we partake of the emblems we are renewing our covenant that we are going to stop eating of any thing that is forbidden in God's law, but will eat and live by these words of eternal life.

THEN and NOW

TWO WEEKS of the new year had sped into the past and old Jerusalem was still astir with consciousness of the doings of the Galilean preacher—Jesus Christ. It had been a season rich with events, full of momentous incidents. Unwittingly the people had received from the great Teacher His last sermon; He had performed what was, perhaps, His crowning miracle, at nearby Bethany, in the raising of Lazarus who had lain in the grave four days. Jesus had forewarned His followers of His own death, which warning had fallen on dull and heavy ears. Now one week had elapsed since the carpenter's Son—amid tumult and shouting—was hailed as "King of Israel" at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

Of the great number of Jews who had assembled at Jerusalem for the New Year Feast days, many had tarried to observe the most solemn feast of the year—the Passover, the commemoration of that auspicious night when the children of Israel started on their departure from the land of Egypt. This anniversary was to be a holy day throughout their generations.

Throughout Jewry the paschal meal had been eaten, the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs and the roasted meat, with the singing of the appointed Psalms. The evening rite had begun the regular Passover observance and the second Sabbath of the year. The day had brought surcease from the full night and day of those stirring events which had followed the observation of the New Passover, instituted by Jesus of Nazareth with His twelve Apostles in the Upper Room.

For many months the reports of the Galilean's movements had annoyed and incensed the chief priests of the Jews and now they had plotted for His life, hoping thus not only to silence His voice but to check the movement which was surging like a sea about them. Without resistance their Man had been captured in Gethsemane, tried and sentenced in Pilate's hall, and crucified on Golgotha's brow. Now He lay in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea.

The drama had been timed closely and enacted swiftly. The priests gloated with pleasure at the shrewd and expeditious handling of so elusive and altogether difficult an offender. At any stage they had at least half feared the interference of the miraculous powers by which He had distinguished Himself. But now the impostor was disposed of—safely—they

reasoned, sealed in the rock-hewn tomb at which a Roman guard had been placed to forestall any wily efforts of His followers to spirit away the body. They rested. . . .

Expecting to resume business as usual upon the first day of the week, Jerusalem had retired content—perhaps—that the feast days had been well observed. More than likely, though, there were some exceptions. At the home of the Roman Procurator, the uneasiness of the blood guiltiness could have made Pilate's nights still somewhat restless. Perhaps he

“. . . felt disturbed
That he had sent Him to a felon's cross
On such a day when spring was in the air
And in His life, for He was young to die.”

And possibly the high priest, Annas, and his crafty son-in-law, Caiaphas, were not absolutely sure that they had by their conniving secured the relief they sought.

In the homes of the close followers and family of the crucified Galilean, sleep was fitful indeed. Their world had been shattered. Dejection, despair and bewilderment disturbed their day's duties and prevented their night's slumber.

Without, night and silence held united empire over the city. With the early morning watch came the breaking of the dawn. The eastern sky blushed with a roseate

purple and the morning star melted into its depth. Not a sound broke the stillness within the hundred streets inside the walls of Jerusalem. Lances of light now shot upward and across the purple sea in the east, and fleeces of cloud, that reposed upon it like barks, catching the red rays of the yet unrisen sun, blazed like burning ships. Each moment the darkness fled and the splendor of the dawn increased upon the first day of the week.

Suddenly there was considerable stir in the quarter of the city where dwelt some of the disciples of the Galilean. It was noised about by swift runners that Jesus was alive!—risen from the tomb! Certain devout women who went early to the sepulcher had found it empty; the great stone that had sealed its mouth was rolled away. They saw there a vision of angels, who had testified that their Lord was risen and sent them to tell the glad news to His brethren in the city. More than that, some of the guards who



Peter and John at the Tomb

had been stationed at the tomb were seen running into the city and toward the high priest's palace in wild excitement, scattering news of a blinding light, an earthquake, an empty tomb. They themselves, they said, when the light shone round them, had been struck to the ground as dead men.

They entered the palace under the greatest excitement, but their exit was with the most casual calm. It was obvious that gold had quelled their agitation and stilled their tongues. But the concourse had received their first report *before* the chief priest paid them to pervert it. The fact that the soldiers were exempt from arrest and severe punishment is proof sufficient that the body of Christ escaped the tomb by a means which they *could not possibly have prevented!*

Peter and John, having been immediately informed by the women of the strange and sudden turn of events, ran to investigate the tomb. They found it empty, the linen clothes only being left. So the glad tidings spread abroad.

The evidence of this stupendous event—*The Resurrection of Jesus Christ*—incredible to His enemies, appalling to those who had gathered to listen to His astonishing doctrine, or to witness His mighty miracles and who had thronged to behold Him crucified on the cross, reacted on His true disciples as a triumphant victory and with a force of impact that resounded throughout the future ages. They arose from their despair and hopelessness to go forth and face a doubting and scoffing world, sounding everywhere the message of a *risen Christ*. Theirs was the unquenchable zeal of martyrs and the unshakable faith of saints.

But, through the centuries till this very day, how dimly the world has failed to be moved by that message! True, the professed Christian world make much of the celebration of Easter, supposing it to be the commemoration of Christ's resurrection; but they have strayed far from the true date of that anniversary, and even farther from the true manner of its observance.

The fifteenth day of the month Abib, or the morrow after the second Sabbath, was a memorial for God's people from of old. We read in the 23rd chapter of Leviticus: "And the Lord spake unto Moses saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, . . . Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall claim to be holy convocations, . . . When ye be come into the land which I give unto you, and shall reap the harvest thereof, then ye shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest unto the priest. And he shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted for you: on the morrow after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it." On that day, the fifteenth of Abib, they were to bring a sheaf of their firstfruits unto the Lord. In the type it was the literal firstfruits. *It had great significance in that it typified that Christ, the firstfruits to immortality, should rise from death's slumber on the fifteenth day of Abib, which is the true date of Easter.*

How shocked would be those who witnessed the stirring events of that day so long ago, were they to awaken in this twentieth century and find a world who profess Christianity endeavoring to honor the risen Son of God by commemorating the day with dyed eggs, Easter bunnies, elaborate confections, and the latest fashions in dress!

How altogether pagan have become the two principal days in which Christ is supposed to be revered: The one, the anniversary of His birth; the other, the more glorious commemoration of that morning when He burst the tomb and was set forever free from the chains of death!

What a declension of reverence from the radiant and exalted hope symbolized in that miraculous event of Abib 15, 33 A. D., to the substitute symbols which are honored in modern Christianity! What a descent from Christ, the Son of the Most High, to fuzzy bunnies and artificially colored eggs! What an evidence of the apostasy of the early Church to utter paganism!

What gratitude should fill our hearts that we have in our possession the pure gem of Truth! May its radiance so lighten our lives and our pathway until, walking wholly in its light, we may one day meet the King of Glory when He returns to claim His own. Then we, likewise, shall be able to triumph over the grave, or, grander yet, if living at Christ's coming, escape its clutches entirely.

Historical observers have this to say concerning those pagan customs that have for centuries degraded the commemoration of Christ's resurrection:

"Such things as Easter eggs, Easter fires, Easter games and Easter laughter all seem to have a heathen origin. . . . Count deGebel in his Religious History of the calendar informs us that the custom of giving eggs at Easter is to be traced to the theology of the Egyptians, Persians, Gauls, Greeks and Romans, among all of whom an egg was an emblem of the universe. . . . When Christianity reached the Teutonic peoples, it was natural for them to think of their old heathen festival of the resurrection of the Sun with the new festival of the resurrection of the Sun of Righteousness; and to graft upon it many of the customs and beliefs of the more ancient celebration which among heathen peoples from time immemorial has taken the form of an outburst of jubilation over the re-awakening of nature after her long, cold, deathlike sleep."

—From *Easter*, by SUSAN RICE

"It was the invariable policy of the early church to give a Christian significance to such of the extant pagan ceremonies as could not be rooted out. In the case of Easter the conversion was peculiarly easy."

—From *Curiosities of Popular Customs*, by WALSH

"Long ago in Persia people used to present each other with eggs at the spring equinox. In Christian times the egg had bestowed upon it a religious interpretation, becoming a symbol of the rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to new life. . . . The Easter bunny had its origin in pre-Christian lore. . . . The Easter bunny has never had a religious symbolism bestowed on its festive usage, though its white meat is sometimes said to suggest purity and innocence."

—From *The Easter Book*, by FRANCIS X. WIESER

We rejoice that these acknowledgedly pagan customs had no part in the Christianity of Jesus or the Apostles.

NOTICE

This special issue is a double number, comprising MEGIDDO MESSAGE Nos. 6 and 7. Our next issue will be dated April 9.

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CHILDREN'S PAGE

The Gateway to The New Year



TWO LITTLE GIRLS, one whose name was Joyful and the other Hopeful, were journeying together down the Way of Life when they came to a beautiful gateway, called the Gateway to the New Year.

"Oh, Joyful," said Hopeful, "what are we going to do now that we have reached the beautiful gateway?"

"Before we leave this gateway," Joyful answered, "we must decide which road we are going to take all through the year."

"Let us make sure it is a good path," said Hopeful.

"Yes," agreed Joyful, "let us see if we can find the same path Jesus followed when He was a little boy!"

There was one path leading through the gateway named Goodness. They found the name on the signpost beside it. "I think this is the way we must take!" they both exclaimed at once.

Just then a traveler came through the gateway. She was a little girl with golden hair and bright blue eyes, and was just about their age. When she saw Joyful and Hopeful she called to them, "Greetings! Are you the gate-keepers here?"

"Oh, no," they answered. "We are just choosing the paths we want to travel through the year!"

"My name is Careful, and I should like to find the way to Thankful Town," said the traveler.

"Would you like to travel with us?" asked Joyful. "We are going the Goodness Road and it will surely lead you to your destination."

"Oh, I like the name of your road!" exclaimed Careful. "Somehow, in my travels I got into Uglyville, and, oh! it was a horrid place! and such people! Oh, my!"

"This road leads far from any places like that!" said Joyful. "None

of the citizens of such bad towns travel this road."

"I would love to go with you!" said Careful, happily.

"We shall be glad to have you," Hopeful replied kindly.

So the three started on together, walking along the path of Goodness.

All of a sudden Joyful cried out, "I've found something!" She had spied a flat stone with a letter on it.

Three heads bent over it all at once, when Hopeful said excitedly, "It's a B! Now what do you suppose that's doing here?"

Venturing farther, golden-haired Careful discovered another such stone—and, sure enough! a letter on it! "It's an E!" was her shrill cry. Three little gold hunters were never more excited. They peered and examined till they found more stones with letters. There was an I, an N, and another E.

"It's oh! so mysterious!" panted Joyful, face all flushed, eyes all bright.

"A problem right at the start!" puffed chubby Hopeful, as she sat down on a log by the roadside. "I wonder if we'll have to get down and squint at every single stone on the Goodness Road to get the answer?"

"I know!" said Careful, "I think we need to start over again and find the key stone." And back she ran, right back to the gateway. Peering, oh, so intently, up the Goodness Road, she cried, "I see something!"

Patter, patter came two more pairs of excited feet, and in just a minute Joyful cried out, "Oh, I see it, too! Look this way, Hopeful and see them! They are regular stepping-stones—see these large flat stones?" Joyful was pointing right straight up the middle of the road.

"Oh, yes! I see them now," exclaimed Hopeful, ever so excitedly.

Suddenly three heads all at once

discovered nine stepping-stones up the road. On each was engraved a letter. They had overlooked the very first one which was O—, then the B—, and the rest were E-D-I-E-N-C—and the last one was an E.

"Goody, goody!" they cried out together.

"We've found them all, I think," said Joyful.

"Yes, for those are the very stepping-stones to Goodness," said Hopeful, thoughtfully. "Obedience is the very way we'll reach our happy ending in Thankful Town, obedience to our parents, our teacher, and to our Father in Heaven."

Careful joined Joyful and Hopeful, and the three pressed on into the sunny New Year, singing happy songs, satisfied they were on the very best road to travel all the year.



Here is a letter from a seven-year-old member of our Bible School Correspondence Class.

"Dear Megiddo Friends,

Abib will soon be here and I can hardly wait. It is always such a happy time when the flowers start to blossom and the birds sing so sweetly. I'm glad to know that Jesus was born in the spring.

Mommy says that December 25th was a heathen feast day, and they changed it to Christ's birthday. When Jesus comes to earth again He would not be happy to find us keeping His birthday on such a day, would He? I hope to see you on Christ's true birthday.

Carolyn J. Williams,
Clarkson, Ontario, Canada."

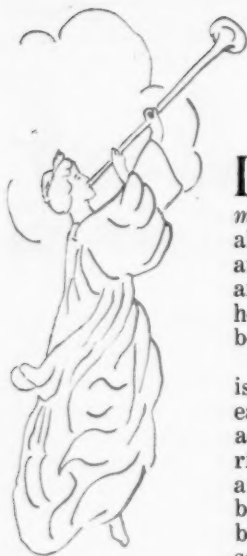


Let dogs delight to bark and bite,
For God hath made them so;
Let bears and lions growl and fight,
For 'tis their nature, too.
But, children, you should never let
Such angry passions rise;
Your little hands were never made
To tear each other's eyes.

—Sel.

Peace on Earth

Good Will Toward Men



LONG ages ago the angels sang of *Peace on earth, good will toward men*. But does our world today, with all its poverty, greed and warfare, answer to the beautiful ideal which angelic hosts described to the shepherds on that night when Jesus was born? God forbid!

Yet, withal, in the heavens the sun is shining; the rain falls upon the earth, and the balmy breezes sweep across the land; stately mountains rise serenely above green landscapes, and clear, peaceful waters reflect the blue sky. All the elements of nature breathe of peace. Wherein lies the source of this tremendous upheaval, the discord and unrest among men?

It lies in man's refusal to co-operate with God. Men are, as the Scriptures predicted they would be, "lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God" (II Tim. 3: 2-4). While such a conglomeration of antagonisms war and clash in every breast, there certainly can be no *peace on earth* or *good will toward men*.

"None of us liveth to himself," said the Apostle Paul. And how true are his words! So involved has society become in this warfare of the elements of human nature that men's hearts are "failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." And the powers of the political heavens are shaken.

But it is vain to weep over the state of the world, the war and the strife among nations. These traits that make for world-wide unhappiness and misery rest within the *individual heart*. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" wrote the Prophet Ezekiel in chapter 18: 31.

During this present phase of God's plan of salvation He is selecting out of the masses of humanity men and women willing to make themselves worthy of occupying a place with Christ on His throne, to aid Him in the supervision of the affairs of earth in that approaching Age when moral law shall be enforced. We, as Christians, are ambassadors of that good time coming, even as was our Lord and Saviour in the days when He walked among men, working out His salvation in the presence of all. "Ye are the light of the world," said Christ. And His earnest entreaty of His followers was, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5: 16).

Peace on earth, good will toward men. This is our message to the world—a message of hope and cheer in these troublous times. We can preach it in a thousand seemingly insignificant ways. We can preach it by practicing the Golden Rule. We can preach it on every hand as we daily take up our cross, and cheerfully bear the ensuing criticisms, comments or ridicule of our fellow

men. We can preach it by comforting words and cheering smiles, radiating from a soul overflowing with kindness. Our life can be as the well by the roadside, where the weary traveler stops to drink, and as the shade of the tree whose branches, laden with fruit of a pure and wholesome life, extend over all that pass beneath.

As a bright surface will reflect the sun, so we may find places in the hearts of others to reflect the radiance of our own lives. Kind, thoughtful, helpful deeds are never lost. Like the ripples from pebbles dropped into the water, they spread on and on and on.

We, as ambassadors for Christ, are not only responsible for ourselves, but there is always the matter of our example to consider. How does our life touch upon that of our brother? Does the effect of our example move him toward the swamps of transgression, or lift him toward the heights of holiness? The Apostle Paul set a standard of conduct for us to follow. He said, "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend" (I Cor. 8: 13).

A hasty tongue, an inconsiderate act: these are the causes for many a secret heartache. But how much happiness is wafted with the kind and thoughtful word! What a fragrance of good will is lent upon the breeze!

There are times when we face the necessity for restoring a brother "overtaken in a fault," one crippled in his moral and spiritual goings, the victim of his broken vows. It becomes our responsibility to rebuke him, but in the spirit of meekness, not superciliously, but with the kindness prompted of the realization that we also, ourselves, oft have need to be healed.

The essence of true love lies not in its tenderness, but in its strength, in its power of endurance, its purity, its self-renunciation. Selfish is the motive that prompts us to seek to be loved instead of loving, consoled instead of consoling, understood instead of understanding. It is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned.

"Feed the hungry" is a Bible command, and we are strongly warned against discrimination. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good," wrote the Preacher (Eccl. 11: 6). *Often there is the greatest need where there seems to be the least*. Behind the placid countenances which we look upon from day to day may be hearts that are burning for a single word of encouragement from us. Are we suffering such hungry souls to perish through our preoccupation? our stolid indifference to a brother's need?

Jesus said: "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward."

Such principles as these are the foundation for *peace on earth, good will toward men*.



Queries from Golgotha

CERTAIN statements purported to have issued from the lips of our Lord during the last painful moments of His life on the cross have long been a subject of controversy among Biblical scholars. Translators of the account charge Him with having uttered the bitter lamentation which appears in Matthew 27:46, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Other men of repute pronounce such a statement from our Lord incredible. The historian, H. G. Wells, said, "These words echo down through the ages, a perpetual riddle to the faithful."

This passage, among others as they appear in our common King James Version, is admittedly puzzling. However, any riddles which arise on the pages of Holy Writ are the work of fallible man and not the product of Divine Inspiration. Through misconception of the context, the translators have in some cases made an unwise choice of definitions which has resulted in erroneous renderings; but in its original language the Book is absolutely free from mystifying or contradictory statements.

Therefore, to ascertain the true meaning of puzzling texts the student must often consult the original language; and never must he do violence to the harmony of the Sacred Word by accepting any interpretation which contradicts the general teachings of the Scriptures, for the Word of God is not "yea and nay" but one harmonious whole.

And so, bearing these facts in mind, it is appropriate at this holy season of the year when our thoughts focus on Christ's Passion, that we pause briefly to resolve the riddle, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

FIRST: Can it be possible that God forsook Jesus on the cross, when all the inspired writers assure us that God never forsakes the righteous, and in Hebrews 13:5 is contained His personal promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee?"

SECOND: Is it possible that Jesus considered Himself forsaken, when, in the last trying ordeal of life, God sent an angel to strengthen Him (Luke 22:39-43)?

THIRD: When a merciful Father reduced Jesus' suffering on the cross from the usual six to nine days (during which crucified men ordinarily lingered in agony) to three brief hours, certainly Jesus would not have charged the Almighty with forsaking Him.

FOURTH: Jesus was the greatest example of all time. Had He quailed in the last moments of life, and uttered the embittered cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me?", then other faithful ones excelled Him in moral courage. We have no record that Stephen, when being stoned to death by the mob, felt himself abandoned by God.

This four-fold evidence drawn from the general tenor of Scriptural principles and also from related phases of the narrative, indicates that God never forsook His well-beloved Son; furthermore that Christ never accused Him of such neglect; therefore, some error must exist in translation.

An examination of Psalm 22:1—a parallel passage and the source of the phrase in question—will clear the rendering. Of the Hebrew word *azab*, there translated "forsaken," Gesenius in his *Hebrew Lexicon* informs us that the first definition of the word is: "To loosen bands and to let a beast go free from its bonds." As an example of its usage, he cites Exodus 23:5, "If thou see the ass of thy enemy lying down under its burden, beware that thou leave him not, but that thou loose his bonds." Gesenius further states: "There is a play of words in the double

use of the verb which stands first in the common signification of forsaking, *then in the primary one of loosing*. It is applied to a servant set free."

Herein lies the error of the translators: They accepted the common signification of "forsaking" instead of the primary meaning of "loosing," setting free. When Jesus realized that death was near, in place of reproaching God for having forsaken Him, He praised God that He was so soon set free, so soon relieved of the pain and suffering inflicted by the cruel mob.

For the word translated "why," Gesenius refers us to the Hebrew word *mah*, and gives as some of its definitions, "How, how much; in exclamations of admiration, as in Job 26:2, 'O how greatly hast thou helped the feeble!'"

Correctly translated, Jesus said, "My God! my God! how greatly hast thou helped me! how wonderful has been my release!" In place of reviling His God, Jesus breathed His last with words of thankfulness upon His lips to the righteous and merciful Father who had relieved Him of His sufferings and who would soon raise Him from death's slumber to the glory of an endless life.

Another incongruity, supposedly from the lips of our Lord on the cross, is found in Luke 23:42, 43. One thief who was crucified with Christ requested, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."

Taken at face value these words might indicate that Jesus promised salvation to the thief, and that he entered paradise that very day. Before forming such a conclusion, however, let us see if relative facts correspond.

FIRST: If the thief entered heaven that day, he went prior to his death, for in the evening the legs of the thieves were broken to prevent their escape when removed from the cross (John 19:31-33).

SECOND: If the thief entered heaven that day, he preceded Christ who three days later addressed Mary in the garden, saying, "I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). In fact, forty days elapsed before His Ascension (Acts 1:3, 9-11).

THIRD: If Jesus promised heaven to the thief, then he was privileged above the disciples to whom it was clearly revealed, "Whither I go, ye cannot come" (John 13:33).

FOURTH: If Jesus promised salvation to the thief, then He nullified the words of His Apostle, Paul, who said, "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? . . . nor thieves, . . . nor revilers" (I Cor. 6:9, 10). Matthew informs us that both thieves reviled Jesus on the cross (27:39-44).

Obviously, the thief entertained no hope of entering heaven either that day or at any subsequent time. How, then, are Jesus' words—"Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise"—to be reconciled with corresponding facts?

The Biblical scholar quickly observes that punctuation is no part of Inspiration; all punctuation was added by the translators, who erred again. Correctly stated, Jesus' words were, "Verily I say unto thee today, Shalt thou be with me in paradise?" "Such a question," *Rodiger's Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* informs us, "may have precisely the force of a negative assertion." Literally, Jesus denounced him, saying, *Thou shalt not be with me in paradise*.

The Incarnation of Christ -- Fact or Fiction?

THE meaning of the term "incarnation" is, "to embody in flesh, cause to assume a living, bodily form." It is derived from the Latin words *in* and *carn*, meaning "in flesh."

Theology holds that Christ always had existed in heavenly regions, but at birth assumed a body of flesh and was born as an infant, grew to manhood, engaged in His ministry and at length was taken by wicked hands and nailed to a cross, died, was resurrected, and returned to Heaven from whence He had come, and again was seated at His Father's right hand.

There are portions of Scripture which, taken alone, could be construed to uphold this theory, for example: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with . . . the glory I had with thee before the world was." But here He speaks of things not yet fulfilled.

The belief in the pre-existence of Christ is a theory with no foundation in truth. Our purpose is to compare that belief with the general teaching of the Bible. In fairness let us weigh what it has to say about Christ's nature and then make an honest appraisal of the facts.

First, bear in mind He was a *man*; "There is one God,"—the Father—"and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Jesus was born a man, all man, not part man and part God. Moses foretold that He should be raised up from among His brethren (Deut. 18: 15, 18). Christ was to be a man like Moses; and no one claims that Moses pre-existed.

King David was shown that of his descendants an heir or Messiah should be born, as testified by Peter at Pentecost. Isaiah foretold that a virgin should give birth to a Son, and should call His name Immanuel, "God with us" (7: 14). The program laid out for Him precludes definitely the idea of His being part God: "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." Imagine a being part God having to learn to discern between good and evil!

The writer of Hebrews makes pointed observations concerning Jesus in His relationship to His Father and His brethren. In chapter 1 He is "the express image of his Father's person." He would not have to be part God to meet that requirement. He "loved righteousness and hated iniquity," hence God had anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. But one need not be part God to meet that requirement. Other godly human beings have done that.

Chapter 2 reveals that Christ was "made a little lower than the angels," for a little while "inferior to the angels" (margin); He was of the same seed as Abraham; in all things He was like unto His brethren, not part man and part God. His nature was the same as was that of His brethren; therefore if He pre-existed, all His brethren could pre-exist. He was "tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4: 15); had to learn "obedience by the things which he suffered" (5: 8, 9). It outrages reason to claim that a being part God would have to learn obedience through suffering.

Peter, at Pentecost, spoke of Jesus as being "a man approved of God" (Acts 2: 22), but said nothing to suggest the idea of His being the very God, incarnated in the flesh! He was but a man, not God.

Birth, growth and manhood enter into the history of Christ's life. At twelve years of age He went with His parents to the Passover Feast at Jerusalem; at about the

age of thirty He began His public ministry. If it were true that He lived in glory before His birth, then His real age on these specified occasions may well have been beyond mortal computation.

The idea that Christ was a heavenly being re-incarnated in the flesh is refuted by Paul in I Cor. 15: 48, "As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."

We read in Gal. 4: 4, "When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman." No being could exist before the material from which it was made existed. Repeatedly Jesus witnessed that He was the Son of God; not once did He declare Himself to be part God physically. He made no claim to equality with God, but said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14: 28).

Let us examine critically Jesus' statements that are commonly construed to uphold His pre-existence. "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John 17: 5). Jesus could not have lived before His birth, nor could it have antedated the creation of the physical earth; hence His words must carry a different meaning than is apparent on the surface. The Greek word *para*, translated "with" in the common version, has also the meaning of "in the presence of." Therefore this should read: "Father, glorify thou me in thy presence, with the glory which I had with thee [by promise] before the world was"—"the world to come, whereof we speak" (Heb. 2: 5).

The promise of His coming and glory was made in Genesis 49: 10, was iterated by Moses, reiterated by the Prophets, and the angel reassured Mary of the honorable position of the "holy child" to be born to her. And there, just after the Last Supper, realizing His life's work was near completion, Jesus prayed that He might be glorified in the Father's presence in fulfillment of the long-standing promise.

Theologians take John 1: 14 as meaning that Jesus had always existed in glory, came down to earth and was born as an infant, took on Himself a body of flesh, thus in that way the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us. *This is false.* He had no being until "the fullness of the time was come." Dr. Moffatt's rendering is much clearer: "So the Logos became flesh and tarried among us"—the Word was made eatable. Jesus became the Perfect Example by eating every word of God.

The theory of incarnation was borrowed from paganism. Greek thought was weighted heavily with belief in dual beings, a combination of the human with the divine. The doctrine of the Platonic school was that a portion of the divine nature was diffused through all human souls, hence it was but natural that the decadent church, during the early centuries of the Apostasy should absorb portions of the popular thought and incorporate it into its theology; and with the passing of the years this theory has become so firmly rooted as to seem basically true. However, a thorough canvass of the evidence reveals it to be of human authority and not Divine; consequently it is fiction, not fact.

To sum up: The words of the Prophets, the Psalms, the Gospels, together with the Epistles and Revelation, are all a beautiful harmony and can be eaten and assimilated by hungry souls so they may gather strength from this "holy flesh" to be overcomers and gain life eternal.



Its Place in the Christian's Life

MUSIC can rouse or soothe; it can suggest the tenderest memories or express the brightest anticipation. Unfortunately, in the possession of sordid performers it can appeal to the basest emotions, and as happily can move the most sacred desires. It is music that intones the mourner's lament or rings the glad melody of the happiest festival; it expresses the keenest disappointment and dejection of the defeated or the victor's triumphant shout.

The Record reveals that music played a part from the earliest of Bible history. Besides poetry, it is the only art that seems to have been cultivated to any extent among the ancient Hebrews. We are told, "Jubal was the father of all such as handle the harp or the organ" (Gen. 4: 21). The first occasion of vocal music recorded in the Bible is found in Exodus 15 where Moses and the Children of Israel sang a grand song of praise to the Lord for their deliverance from Pharaoh's army. Later in the same chapter we find instrumental and vocal music combined in glorifying God. The Old Testament refers frequently to the use of music in praise and worship of God. The Psalms were written for special occasions and many of them set to music. As long as God had a Kingdom on earth music played an important part in Divine worship.

As to the New Testament, it has an eventful opening. The fact that the angel chorus sang at the birth of the Christ-child gives music Divine authority.

In the days of Jesus and the Apostles no mention is made of the use of instruments, and certain religious denominations take this as an indication that instrumental music should not be used, or was even condemned in Divine worship. The fact that instruments are not mentioned, by no means proves their use unlawful. It must be remembered that during this time the believers were subjected to persecution and it would be extremely inconvenient if not impossible to carry instruments with them. As persecutions increased, many times it was important to meet in secret and the additional sound of an instrument might have betrayed their hiding place.

There are two instances in the New Testament where music was used in very solemn circumstances. After Christ and His Apostles had partaken of the Passover and Christ knew that the greatest trial of His life awaited Him, they found strength and consolation in the singing of a hymn. They sang this hymn and went out to suffer. Paul and Silas sang praises to God at midnight in the prison with their feet fast in the stocks. Their song must have established a direct connection with the throne of God, for suddenly there was a great earthquake which shook the foundation of the prison. Without doubt they sang many songs of rejoicing after that night.

In church service the opening hymn transports our thoughts from the everyday cares of this mortal existence and places them on a higher plane, above our temporal surroundings. It puts us in direct communion with God. For the first time that day everyone in the congregation is thinking on the same subject. We are in a better position to receive the message from the sermon.

It has been said that a hymn is addressed to God and a gospel song to the people. The Christian delights in the command to sing praises to God, and if faithful he will have eternity in which to do it. He also is required to perfect his character, to warn, to exhort, and stimu-

late himself and others to greater efforts in the divine life, and he has only a few short years in which to accomplish this. Therefore the need is far greater for the gospel song.

There are many types of songs which can be used by a Christian. There are songs of praise to God, songs of thanksgiving, songs about Christ and His Second Advent, songs about the future Kingdom, songs to strengthen our faith, songs of Christian warfare, songs of hope, of prayer, of penitence, of guidance. Hymns should be sung with more thought given to their message than is usually the case. A prayer sung to God should be rendered prayerfully, slowly, with feeling of the words we are uttering. A song of praise should be sung in a rousing manner, not dragged out and groaned with no spirit. Glorifying God should speed up the heart beat and quicken the spirit!

It is most important that all songs used by Christians conform to the Word of God. We find many of the old hymns contain thoughts directly opposed to Biblical teaching. For instance, we could not sing,

"His blood can make the foulest clean,
His blood availed for me."

Just compare this with Jesus' words, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15: 3). Jesus never said His literal blood would avail to our salvation; but His word, if lived out in our daily life, will gain for us life eternal.

In every Christian's morning and evening devotional services the singing of hymns is a hearty enjoyment as well as a spiritual stimulant. There is in reality no better way to impress upon the mind the many phases of a Christian's walk, his responsibility to God, and his duty to man. Impressions made through a song are often more lasting than those made otherwise. And during a trial they are an ever ready bulwark against the powers of sin.

It is important that the energies of young people be channeled in the right direction. Playing or singing of uplifting melody provides an emotional outlet for youth unsurpassed in other purposeful activities.

Besides being a divine command, we should consider our participation in music as a rare privilege. We should give it the best of which our limited time and talents are capable, always keeping in mind the words of Paul, "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

There are those who cannot sing a note or distinguish one tone from another; yet they can make melody in their hearts to the Lord (Eph. 5: 19) and grasp full import of the gospel message which the song conveys. And, if faithful, it may be a sweeter joy to them in the future when—the cords of their throat loosed and their ear attuned to the Infinite—they sing for the first time the praises of their Creator, Lord and King.

Just what musical enjoyment the grand future holds for the faithful we cannot conceive, but we are certain it will be most desirable. The Revelator gives but a glimpse: "I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, ..." (Rev. 14: 2, 3). Shall we not be delighted to hear it? or by the grace of God to finger the golden harp strings ourselves, and comingle our voices with those of the ransomed throng? Our joy will be complete when we are privileged to sing the "song of Moses and the Lamb."



Gleanings



"The best kind of face-lifting we ever do is done when high inner character breaks out into a straightforward countenance that can look people squarely in the eye and show the friendliness that is not pretended. Our faces, over the years, do reveal the quality of our thoughts, the conduct of our days. There is no fairer picture on earth than the animation and glory of a plain face, grown uncommonly lovely with inner discipline and patience, courage and courtesy."

—Selected.



It matters not for thee to know
What this New Year may yet bestow;
'Tis thine to do and live, and be
What God and duty ask of thee.



"When I am tempted to repine
That such a lowly lot is mine,
There comes to me a voice which saith
'Mine were the streets of Nazareth.'

"So mean, so common and confined,
And He the Monarch of mankind!
Yet patiently He traaveleth
Those narrow streets of Nazareth.

"It may be I shall never rise
To place or fame beneath the skies—
But walk in straitened ways till
death,
Narrow as streets of Nazareth.

"But if through honor's arch I tread
And there forget to bend my head,
Ah! let me hear the voice which saith,
'Mine were the streets of Nazareth.'"
—Selected.



"I watched them tearing a building down,
A gang of men in a busy town.
With a ho-heave-ho and a lusty yell
They swung a beam, and the sidewall fell.
I asked the foreman, 'Are these men skilled,
And the men you'd hire if you had to build?'
He gave a laugh and said: 'No, indeed!
Just common labor is all I need.
I can easily wreck in a day or two
What builders have taken a year to do.'

"And I thought to myself as I went away,
Which of these roles have I tried to play?
Am I a builder who works with care,
Measuring life by the rule and square?
Am I shaping my deeds to a well-made plan,
Patiently doing the best I can?
Or am I a wrecker, who walks the town
Content with the labor of tearing down?"

A year of the time that belongs to
God has rolled into the past. Whether
our conduct has been medium, good or
bad it is all recorded. One black mark
will spoil our book.



May we not

LOOK into the mirror of Truth and then go
away and forget what manner of men we
were (James 1:23, 24).

SIT down to eat and drink and rise up to
play (Exodus 32:6).

PUT our hands to the plow and look back-
ward (Luke 9:62).

HONOR God with our lips and deny Him
by our actions (Matt. 15:8).

ATTEMPT to remove the mote out of our
brother's eye while a beam is in our own
eye (Matthew 7:3, 4).

BE zealously affected in a good thing only
when a superior is present with us (Gal.
4:18).

THINK of ourselves more highly than we
ought to think (Rom. 12:3).

PRAY to God for forgiveness for our sins
and then fail to forgive others for their
sins against us (Matthew 6:12).

SPEND a lifetime to develop a reputable
character and then spoil it by a little folly
(Ecc. 10:1).



"Always stand at the bow! Leave
the stern with its backward look and
make for the bow. To spend time in
sad review of past sins and failures
is not to put them to the best account.
Failure often provides the material
for success and our dead selves may
become the stepping-stones to better
things. The past is irreparable; the
future is available. *Leave the stern
with its backward look and make for
the bow!*"
—Selected.



Memo to me:

Others Live Here, too

"Search me, O God, and know my
heart"—let me know about this heart
of mine, what Thou dost know. "Try
me, and know my thoughts"—that is,
my innermost motives, my undermost
purposes, my hidden-away ambitions
—the thing underneath all else that
is really gripping my life. "Try me."

"Try" is a fire word. It means a
hotly heated furnace, and the metal
heated to the liquid state, that all the
dross may be freed out and come to
the top in clear view, and then be
painstakingly skimmed off. "Try me."
Let the fire-test come. There's a won-
drous life of purity and power at the
end of that road.



"The brightest souls which glory ever knew,
Were rocked in storms and nursed when
tempests blew."



"Lift me, O God, above myself—
Above my highest spheres,
Above the thralling things of sense
To clearer atmospheres.

"Lift me above the little things
My poor sufficiencies,
My perverse will, my lack of zeal,
My inefficiencies;

"Above the earth-born need that
gropes,
With foolish hankerings,
About earth's cumbered lower slopes
For earthly garnerings.

"Lift me, O God, above myself,
Above these lesser things,
Above my little gods of clay,
And all their captivings."



Did you give a cheerful greeting
To the friend who came along?
Or a starched sort of "Howdy,"
As you vanished in the throng?
Were you selfish—pure and simple—
As you rushed along the way,
Or is someone mighty grateful
For a deed you did today?

Did you waste the day, or use it?
Was it well or poorly spent?
Did you leave a trail of kindness,
Or a tear of discontent?
As you close your eyes in slumber,
Do you think that God would say
You have earned one more tomorrow
By the work you did today?

—Selected

PROPHECY

AT THIS notable season of true Christmas and New Year we advertise again to all peoples everywhere the inestimable worth of Divine prophecy. It is God's gift to mankind. We commend it to all the world, for Christ was Himself a Prophet and a subject of prophecy.

After His resurrection, when Christ walked with His two disciples on the way to Emmaus, He began at Moses and all the prophets and "expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself." Moses wrote some 1,500 years before. He foretold Christ would come and that He would speak the words of God to the people. The prophecy was fulfilled as predicted, revealing the genuineness of the Source. Now here is a theme, the importance of which cannot be over-emphasized.

Prophecy, the foreknowledge of future events, is a marvel and a source of continual strength to the instructed. Prophecy is a most outstanding feature of the Bible and gives it the unique and exclusive stamp of the Divine. Such wisdom could come from no other source than the genuine. It comes from God.

Christ, the prophesied, born to be King of kings, raised up from among men to godly royalty, constitutes one of the main themes of Scripture. Established then on such a foundation, He Himself becomes a Prophet of indisputable authority. It is proper that we remember His words at all times for they, together with the words of the Apostles whom He directly commissioned, are of greatest importance in our own perplexing era.

In His first sermon Jesus taught His disciples to pray those famous but much misunderstood words: "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." It was at that time He taught so plainly, "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 6:10; 5:5). Then in a parable Jesus likened Himself unto a nobleman going "into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return" (Luke 19:12). (These statements are all prophetic.) Further, in His last message, the entire prophetic book of Revelation, He tells us repeatedly that He will return and also the wonders to be disclosed at that time.

Strong is the evidence and beautiful the hope contained in these promises; but we want to know more. How can we know when these things are to be fulfilled? We can know by prophecy. Jesus gave us the ominous facts concerning conditions that would prevail at that time. When asked for a sign of His coming, He prophesied that it should be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot. Those were days of surpassing evil and wickedness, so much so that they have been used synonymously for all that is low and vile. That such a shameful state now exists is attested daily.

In a fast, modern and tremendously complex world, mankind forgets the words of Jesus. With noise and speed, radio and television, inventions and appliances, wages and taxes, strikes and wars, planes and bombs, men are distracted and

frightened. People fear man—not God. They read the newspapers—not the Bible. Distant and weak seems the Word. But lift your eyes from the latest atomic announcement and listen. Hear Him who spoke by prophecy:

"Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:26—28).

Jesus had just foretold the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dispersion of the Jews. This came to pass some 35 years later. Today we witness the fulfillment of His prophecies relating to this time, the time just prior to His second coming. In the face of such evidence, skepticism is for the blind in heart. Fear is for the uninstructed. The plan will be accomplished, Christ will return.

Standing in stalwart phalanx with the Master are the words of His Apostles with more prophecy: "In the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection . . . lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God. . . . Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (II Tim. 3:1—4, 13). "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?" (II Pet. 3:3, 4). Then James reveals a heaping together of wealth in the last days (5:3). Surely we behold this condition to a degree never before equalled in history.

Of special import to us today and very dear to our heart is the prophecy of Mal. 4:5, "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." This vital promise was confirmed by the Master: "Elias truly shall first come and restore all things" (Matt. 17:11). Today we advertise this special message for the immediate future. The coming of Elijah is now very imminent and as sure as that Christ ever lived on earth and promised it.

The entire subject of prophecy is extensive. It constitutes a grand study, worthy of a lifetime of scholarly application. The Bible is woven full of it. So much of it has come to pass that we know to a certainty the rest will be fulfilled. Considering the store of evidence at hand and the availability of God's Word, it seems passing strange that the world should be so unaware and indifferent to it. Surely there is need of intensive advertising.

Prophecy—the king of all literary productions, the foundation of faith—how we should esteem it. But there are prophecies both of blessing and of woe—blessings to God's faithful servants and curses to the unfaithful. What of us? Where shall we stand?

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Meditations On the Word

"In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

THE pages of history are filled with tributes to military conquerors, men who by brilliant command of armies were able to subject their enemies and enlarge their empires. Such victories at best were brief and the rewards infinitesimal compared with Jesus' victory which was far more difficult to achieve. Divine Law meant more to Him than earthly ambitions or desires, and to it He subjected His will, His emotions, His passions. Today, humankind at large have to admit that they are conquered by the world and its troubles. But the voice of Jesus rings through the years, "Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Jesus was facing a cruel death. In a few hours He would be in the hands of His enemies. His betrayer had already gone out to do the wicked and shameful deed. Jesus knew all this. How then, could He say, when faced with what appeared like certain defeat, "I have overcome the world"?

He could say these words triumphantly because, as He testified, He did "always those things that please" the Father. Knowing He had always done God's will, He felt He was not left alone in this fiery trial. Death could have no power over Him. In a few hours He would arise to live evermore, to confound His enemies and to strengthen His followers.

After His resurrection He said to His disciples, "All power is given unto me. . . ." It was in anticipation of this honor and glory that on that night in the Upper Room He was able to have such control of the situation and encourage His Apostles as He did. While the glory of earth's victors vanishes, the work Jesus did shall never be forgotten, and His glory will increase immeasurably when His Kingdom is established and He rules supreme.

Again, Jesus' words ring in our ears, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." As Jesus fulfilled His mission, so He expects us to fulfill ours. Of us who have been entrusted with the knowledge of His will, He expects kingly service; and more, He deserves it. It is for us to take our stand at the place of duty, where we are, and live a victorious life as Jesus did.

Our duty is in the world; we have a message for it, yet we are to be no part of the world as Jesus was not of the world. We are to bear the message of the cross—a cross of self-denial, of following Jesus' footsteps daily in humble, obedient service. In the proclamation of this message and in walking in the way of the cross there can be no voluntary retreat, no passive waiting for the end. Fidelity in the way of the cross means not a retreat from the world but a fulfillment of our duty within it. Having a mission in the world we cannot live unto ourselves either as individual disciples or as the Church of Christ. We cannot live in isolation but must function as witnesses to our fellow men; nor can we break the tension of such rigid duty either by an easy acceptance of the world, or a retreat from it.

This need not cause discouragement. Difficulties bring out the best in men. Jesus said, "In the world ye shall

have tribulation." The strain and stress and struggle of daily life are often hard to bear, but we all know that competition with others develops strength. No man ever became an athlete without a struggle, and no one can be physically fit without exercise. So all the moral struggles we encounter can develop in us the strength of Christian character acceptable to God.

While in this turbulent world the highest virtue is developed because of freedom of choice. Being created free moral agents we are free to choose; free to choose the right and good, but able also to choose the wrong and evil. There is no virtue in being good or doing right when you cannot do anything else. *It is only as we choose to do right and refuse to do wrong of our own free will that there is any virtue in our conduct.* In His ministry Jesus never attempted to dominate men, but He did seek to influence them to love the truth and do right willingly.

It is well to note that Jesus did not say, "I have solved the problems of the world," but He did say, "I have overcome the world." From this we are assured that He promises us, not the removal of difficulties but power to surmount them. The Apostle Paul in meeting his difficulties found strength in this promise, as he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

The great question we must settle is, What is our aim and purpose in life? If you are looking for this world's wealth, if your supreme object is popularity, if your great purpose is to live a life of gaiety and pleasure, then this world can crush you. What the world gives, it can also take away. But if your purpose is to develop your character, to Christianize your personality, to be a better man or woman, then the world has no power to crush you. You may defy the world, the flesh; not in your own strength alone, but in and by the strength of God. Surrender your life to Him, let Him direct your future, and you will find it possible to resist any temptation and to bear the burdens of life without complaining. In short, you will live a victorious life. It takes all kinds of weather to make a real sailor, and it takes all manner of circumstances, unpleasant as well as pleasant, to make a fine and noble Christian character.

If you are a real disciple of Jesus you will learn the need of discipline. Note the similarity of the words, discipline and disciple. When life is hard and things are difficult do not pity yourself, and do not blame the Creator or His laws. He is your Heavenly Father and seeks your highest good. It is not how much trouble you have that determines a successful life, but how you take it.

"Oh, a trouble's a ton, or a trouble's an ounce,
Or a trouble is what you make it.

And it isn't the fact that you're hurt that counts,
But only—how did you take it?"

Jesus came into the world to show us how it is possible to triumph over circumstances and conquer our environment, and that trials and tribulations are the means by which our characters are developed. May our aim and purpose in life be to make the very best of circumstances and to learn something for our future good from all our experiences.

Excelsior!

AMONG the countless men and women that have lived and died upon this earth are geniuses of the type described by Longfellow in his famous poem, "Excelsior!"* They are men and women whose desire for achievement leads them to resist all temptations, to lay aside all fears; and, heedless of all dissuasion, press right on to accomplish their purpose. Their motto is "Excelsior!"—higher!

The poet pictures their life course as that of a lone youth passing through the rough, cold paths of the world, where his watchword is in an unknown tongue, disregarding the happiness he could so easily achieve on lower levels, even, while groaning within himself, he sees the glaciers—his fate—before him. Yet to all warnings his only answer is, "Higher yet!"

Filled with these aspirations, he perishes, without having reached the perfection he longed for.

Perfection in any creative, intellectual or artistic pursuit is something wholly beyond the reach of mortal man. Man cannot comprehend it, let alone grasp it. How wondrous and how intricate are the laws that govern the universe! How vast its scope! How full of beauty the entire range of God's creation! What a challenge to man do the very gifts of his five senses present—the gift of smell, of touch, of taste, of hearing, and seeing! And what possibilities lie hidden in the power of voice and thought! Life is far too short even to begin the exploration of the wonders that lie all about us, within and without ourselves.

"EXCELSIOR!"—higher! Must that cry always be frustrated by the weakness and the limitations of mortality? Is there no way over those cold barriers whereupon human endeavors sink into silence?

There is! But shortsighted, foolish man, in his vast impatience for attainment, passes it by.

*Excelsior is a Latin word, meaning "higher."

God has, as it were, surrounded us with colossal heights, challenging our spirits to *Climb!* But the rare, sweet joys to be found upon those sunlit peaks, enveloped in golden clouds, are not for the heedless and headstrong, not for the selfish and greedy, nor yet for the proud or the haughty, but for the meek, lowly and self-disciplined. There is but one gateway to Life Immortal, and that lies upon the summit of the mountain of MORAL PERFECTION. And how lovingly has the great Creator suited its slopes to man's frail strength! Steep and rugged though it be, it can be surmounted in a lifetime of patient, steady effort.

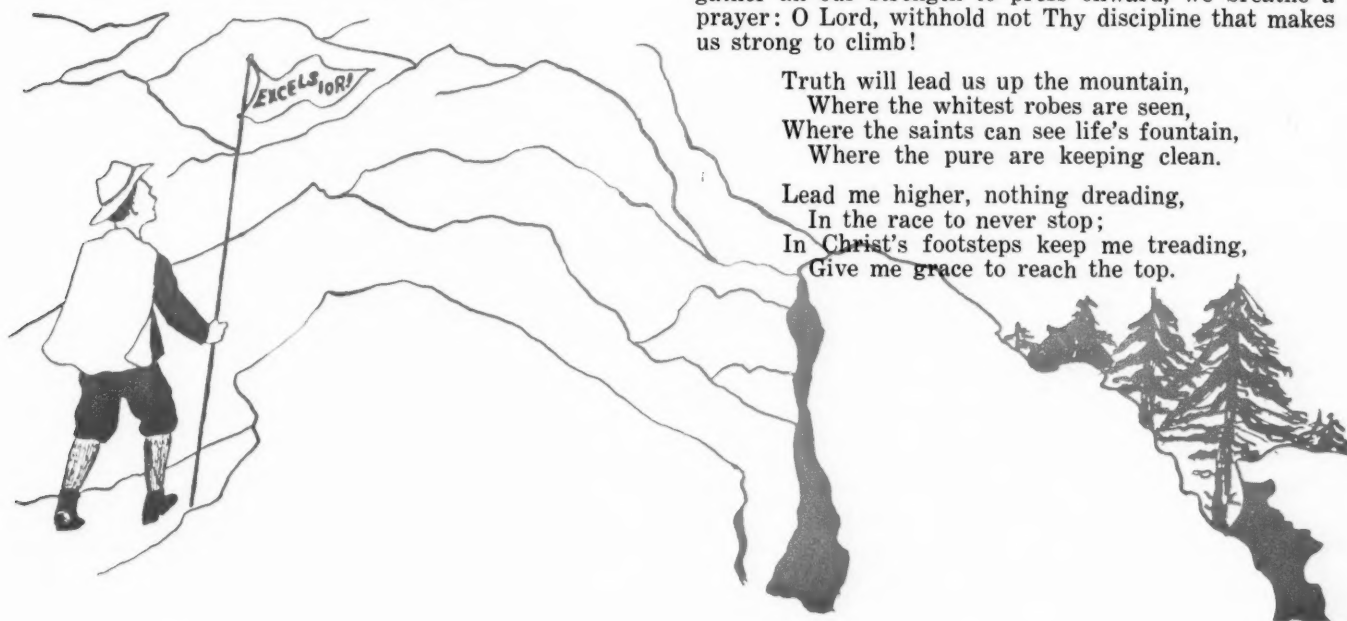
O Christian, here is a challenge to call forth our highest endeavors! With the banner tightly clenched in our hand, the fire of zeal in our eye, a radiant hope in our heart, and EXCELSIOR! on our lips, let us go forward! Along the narrow path that steadily ascends, there will be trials—they will rain at times like a tempest; and there are torrents of Doubt that will sweep across the way. Again, we shall find ourselves face to face with glaciers of Fear and avalanches of Indifference. And at every turn there will be petty snags to test our patience, and stones and pitfalls to develop our alertness. But no one need fear! These are for our moral development. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." And, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone."

The greatest dangers we shall meet along the way are those alluring byroads that wind ever downward to the vales below, where ease-loving mortals while away their brief existence. There lies the home of Procrastination, and the temple of Self-Gratification. But, Christian, look not upon them, nor linger for a moment! These things are not for us!

"EXCELSIOR!"—higher! Our rest lies in the City Eternal, on the glorious, sunlit heights above! As we gather all our strength to press onward, we breathe a prayer: O Lord, withhold not Thy discipline that makes us strong to climb!

Truth will lead us up the mountain,
Where the whitest robes are seen,
Where the saints can see life's fountain,
Where the pure are keeping clean.

Lead me higher, nothing dreading,
In the race to never stop;
In Christ's footsteps keep me treading,
Give me grace to reach the top.



The Brotherhood of Man

We look out on a troubled world,
A world of hate, discord, and strife,
Where challenges and threats are hurled,
With no regard for human life.
Each is distrustful of his brother,
And seeks to best him when he can;
While nations war with one another.
Is this the "brotherhood of man"?

We look, and some may wonder how
Such a condition can exist
If God is just. Can we allow
That Righteousness and Peace have kissed?
Bright angels voiced the proclamation
When Christ was born, "Good will to men,
And peace on earth to every nation!"
But still we hear the echo, "When?"

For ages men have longed to see
The day that Mars would sheathe the sword;
And many have ceased to believe
The promise given in the Word.
But, friends, we cannot blame the story—
Who said Peace would be given then?
Not until Christ returns in glory
Shall there be "good will" unto men.

And though we may not comprehend,
Or scarce believe the wondrous tale,
God's Word will triumph in the end,
His glorious promise shall not fail.
For Christ was born to have dominion,
To rule the earth from sea to sea;
And God cares not for man's opinion—
What He decreed in time shall be.

But is it worth our while to wait?
Yes, friends; that day draws on apace.
"Behold, the Judge stands at the gate,"
Soon we shall see Him face to face.
Then shall be brought to pass the saying,
"Death has been swallowed up of life;"
And God's own saints, Truth's flag displaying,
Shall bring an end to carnal strife.

What words of hope the shepherds heard,
Words of encouragement and cheer!
And with this thought *our* hearts are stirred—
That their fulfillment now is near.
So look up, with anticipation,
And greet Him when He comes again
To occupy the highest station,
Dispensing Peace, Good Will to men.